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국제학박사 학위논문

Electoral Cartel for Domination

LDP-Kōmeitō Cooperation in Urban Districts

도시부 선거구에서의 선거우위확보를 위한
자민당 · 공명당 협력

2018 년 8 월

서울대학교 국제대학원
국제학과 국제지역학 전공
손 석 의

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이 논문을 국제학박사 학위논문으로 제출함

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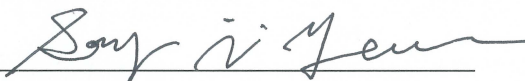
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore why the coalition alliance between Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the Kōmeitō has sustained over the past two decades, despite a number of jeopardizing factors—from antagonistic history, policy and ideological incompatibilities, to electoral crises. This study argues that the LDP's sustained dominance after the collapse of the 'LDP system' was engineered by the electoral alliance with the Kōmeitō instituted from 1999, as well as the two parties' successful consolidation of a system of electoral dominance particularly in urban regions. The electoral alliance with the Kōmeitō and its tenacious organized votes has functioned to compensate LDP candidates' inability to expand cohesive party support in urban regions.

At the same time, despite conventional views on the LDP-Kōmeitō electoral alliance constituting of preprogrammed exchanges of votes during general elections, the empirical studies suggest that the development of the two-party alliance is inundated with the evidence of unequal distribution of electoral resources. From the system of candidate recommendations to allocation of votes, the LDP and Kōmeitō alike developed such a system that allows individuated incorporation of Kōmeitō votes on the one hand, and the Kōmeitō devised an internal mechanism to avoid over-supporting the LDP counterpart, on the other. Such 'adjustment mechanism' installed at three polity levels—central, prefectural, and district—is embodied within the LDP-Kōmeitō electoral alliance that have developed unequally across districts and regions. Put simply, the two-party relations is characterized by flexible adaptations to both internal and external environments, rather than by the rigid and one-sided centralization process, which provided resilience against recurring political and electoral crises and have allowed the two alliance partners to overcome their policy and ideological incompatibilities.

In order to illustrate the unique alliance between the LDP and the Kōmeitō that has transformed over the past two decades, this research is structured as follows. Chapter II traces the process during which the LDP and Kōmeitō developed to share the same preference for coalition formation amid the political realignment in the 1990s. It

illuminates how the introduction of new electoral rules induced perceptual changes among political parties regarding the future consolidation of two-party system, and how such ‘assumption’ shaped the rationalities of political actors in the early years of political restructuring. In the meantime, the Kōmeitō’s experience under the NFP initiative, as well as Kōmeitō-Sōka Gakkai tension during that period, became the foundation for the institutionalization of LDP-Kōmeitō electoral alliance in later years. From the LDP’s perspective, on the other hand, the party’s shift from fierce anti-Gakkai campaign to Kōmeitō-courting was triggered by both inter- and intra-party realignments, which ended with the triumph of the hardline conservatives.

Chapter III discusses the institutional setting of the LDP-Kōmeitō electoral alliance, and how the ‘cooperation’ was systematized to incorporate diverse logics of resource distribution and realize flexible adaptations at three polity levels—central, prefectural, and district levels. Specifically, historical experiences played the key role in devising the Kōmeitō’s mechanism of ‘risk-minimization’ during the execution of election cooperation, which was designed to favor individual-based evaluation and vote mobilization mechanisms over collective methods.

The following two chapters analyze how the such ‘flexible adaptations’ mechanism manifest in the executions of electoral cooperation in the forms of temporal as well as regional variations of LDP-Kōmeitō electoral alliance. First, Chapter IV deals with the temporal variations found in the execution of LDP-Kōmeitō electoral cooperation during general elections in the urban districts. The analyses of the past six general elections held between 2000 and 2014 reveal that the sustainability of the unlikely partnership was engineered not only by the high level of coherence among Kōmeitō supporters, but also through the alliance’s ability to accommodate changing internal and external environments into the operation of electoral cooperation. As the analysis reveals, the ‘challenges’ against the LDP-Kōmeitō alliance continued to transform over time—from the rise of two-party competition, floating voters, to the emergence of new political parties. Yet the coalition alliance has demonstrated its flexibility in overcoming these challenges through the successful institutionalization of adjustment mechanism. Chapter V discusses the regional variation of LDP-Kōmeitō electoral alliance by looking at the

cases of Tokyo and Osaka, particularly in relations to how the rise of local parties affect local LDP-Kōmeitō alliances differently in the two regions. The diverging reactions to the Osaka Restoration Party and its national counterpart Japan Restoration Party in Tokyo and Osaka were embedded not only in the different institutional settings but also in the local power balance among the LDP, Kōmeitō, and ORA/JRP, as well as the accumulated methods of resource allocation that were characterized as ‘mutual dependence’ in Osaka and ‘disengaged coalesce’ in Tokyo.

This study concludes with the prospects of the two-party alliance in the future, by discussing the transformation of LDP-Kōmeitō ‘electoral cartel’ and its possible limitations. First, the primary ‘limitation’ of the two-party alliance derives from declining party support for the Kōmeitō that appears in the results of recent national and local elections. Second, even though the LDP-Kōmeitō coalition seems to have maintained electoral dominance after 2012, the detailed analyses reveal that its triumphs rested largely on the opposition failure, and there are significant number of ‘non-LDP/Kōmeitō’ conservative votes in urban regions that could possibly overturn the electoral alliance between LDP and Kōmeitō. LDP’s recent attempt to expand the support to rightwing groups may be explained as the party’s countermeasure for such electoral vulnerability. Yet such ‘flirtation’ with rightwing political parties and civic groups is in essence incompatible with the coalition with the Kōmeitō whose supporters prefer centrist-conservative agendas, and it can possibly alter the foundations of LDP-Kōmeitō electoral alliance in the future.

The major implications of this study are as follows. First, while prevalent opposition failure seems to be the chronic reason for LDP’s sustained dominance, the electoral alliance with the Kōmeitō was the critical apparatus through which the LDP was able to overcome new urban challenges under the new electoral rules. Second, this study elucidates upon the changing nature of vote cultivation among LDP candidates, whose traditional local networks continue to shrink in number. In other words, the incorporation of Kōmeitō’s organized votes into LDP candidates’ individual personal kōenkai provided resilience against LDP’s old problems—namely the lack of strong party support, particularly in the urban districts. Even though the significance of personal vote

cultivation itself does not necessarily dismiss the importance of unorganized votes, it still holds implications on the behaviors of political actors in their districts. Lastly, the case of LDP-Kōmeitō coalition founded upon ‘electoral alliance’ suggests that the successful electoral alliance can lead to sustainable inter-party coalition, even when the participating parties do not share similar policy preferences. While existing studies on coalition government tend to focus only on number-games in the parliament or policy compatibility in explaining the durability (or lack thereof) of coalition government, the case of LDP-Kōmeitō government provides insight to how successful electoral arrangement can produce sustainable coalition government at the national level.

.....
**Keywords: Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Kōmeitō, electoral alliance,
urban election, LDP dominance**

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. Sustained LDP Dominance and the Puzzle of LDP-Kōmeitō Alliance

The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)'s loss of a simple majority in the 1993 Lower House election signaled the collapse of so-called 'LDP system,'¹ which consequentially was thought to put an end to the party's "one-party predominance" after thirty-eight years of uninterrupted rule in Japan. Following the series of political reform centered around the electoral system reform in 1994, many predicted the arrival of what was considered to be the ideal form of party competition—the competitive two-party system—to take root in Japan's political market. In the past quarter century, Japan's political dynamics underwent significant alterations, yet neither the consolidation of competitive two-party system nor the dismantlement of LDP's dominance came about. Instead, what replaced the 1955 system was another mechanism of dominance by 'electoral cartel,' established between the LDP and its two-decade-long coalition partner, the Kōmeitō, in 1999.

The sustained dominance of the LDP after the collapse of the LDP system is a puzzling phenomenon, given that the non-LDP coalition alliance, during the eleven-month rule between 1993 and 1994, carried out a series of political reforms with the specific purpose of dismantling the 'fortification' of the LDP's one-party predominance—the rural-biased political and economic systems. Particularly, the new electoral rule in 1994, which introduced the combined electoral system of single-member district system (SMD) and proportional representation (PR), was expected to redress candidate-based clientalist practices under the multi-member district system by realizing competitive two-party system. Further, the new districting rules were applied to rectify the malapportionment of electoral districts that were pervasive throughout the period of LDP rule, drastically reducing the vote-seat disparity between the urban and rural

¹ Kabashima (2014) defines rural-intensive political and economic systems of postwar Japan as "LDP system," which consists of three interrelated factors: (1) higher political participation in the rural areas, (2) rural-biased malapportionment, and (3) leadership positions of the LDP representatives from rural districts. He argues that one of the characteristics of Japan's postwar political and economic system was that the rural regions had higher political leverage deriving from electoral systems as well as LDP's internal power balance (3-13).

districts. In other words, these new electoral environments were meant to strip away LDP's political and electoral resources accumulated mostly in rural areas by re-directing the center of electoral competitions to the urban regions and inducing party-centered competitions based on policies.

Yet the verdict, it seems, remains undelivered whether the series of institutional changes implemented throughout the 1990s brought about those 'expected' consequences of the reforms. At one point, the rise of the DPJ and its successful overthrowing of the LDP in the 2009 general election seemed to put an end to the long-time debate over institutionalization of two-party system as well as the party-oriented politics in Japan (Reed 2007; Scheiner 2012; Tanaka 2009). Yet the results of general elections held after the split of the DPJ in 2012 once again gave legitimacy to those who argued that Japan was on its way back to multi-partism, with supreme dominance of the LDP (Machidori 2015: 125). In a similar vein, in terms of electoral competition, some believe that nationalization of electoral competition is on the rise, consolidating party-oriented competitions (McElwain 2012; Reed, Scheiner and Thies 2012). Others, on the other hand, remain skeptical as to whether the importance of 'locality' in election campaign has truly diminished after the electoral reform (Stockwin 1999; Park 2000; McKean and Scheiner 2004; Krauss and Pekkanen 2004; Curtis 2004).

Notwithstanding ubiquitous disagreements on the changes brought to Japan's party systems or the nature of electoral competition by the institutional reform, however, few would question the resilience of the LDP under the new political and electoral environment. Except for the three years of DPJ administration (2009-2012), the LDP managed to dominate political and economic resources by remaining as the largest political party in the Diet, even during the political realignment in the 1990. The question that will be explored in this study focuses on how the LDP survived these drastic electoral challenges that arose after the introduction of the new electoral system.

While most agree that the LDP's dominance in the post-reform years stands upon fundamentally distinct system from the one cultivated under the LDP system, the opinions are divided when it comes to *what* sustained LDP's prolonged dominance after 1994. Some claim that while electoral system reform indeed weakened the system of

LDP's predominance that relied heavily on the rural-biased political-economic mechanism, LDP's dominance remains salient in rural regions, which continues to be the foundation of LDP's electoral strength (Jou 2010). Others have developed an argument based on the idea that the electoral system reform in 1994 was fundamentally flawed, failing to address the problem of opposition failures induced by subsets of electoral systems that continued to divide the opposition forces. The system of dual-candidacy, for example, is said to have motivated the political parties to field candidates even when the chances of winning the single-member competitions are slim (McKean and Scheiner 2000; Reed and Shimizu 2009). Others argue that the reason why small parties do not always pull away from the SMDs is because they fear 'lagging behind' in the mobilization of supporters in PR tier (Tatebayashi, Soga, and Machidori 2008: 84-85). Those who illuminate upon the role of so-called 'floating voters' as the determinant of electoral results claim that elections are becoming increasingly nationalized and claim that the heightened 'image' of prime minister is the key role in determining the 'swing' of these unaffiliated voters. In other words, voters are no longer bound by their local connections or personal attachment to candidates, but instead their voting decisions are made based on the performance of those in power regarding 'national agendas' (Tanaka and Martin 2003; McElwain 2012). The LDP has successfully manipulated the prime minister's right to dissolve the Lower House in 'timing' the general election, and, as the ruling party, has kept the upper-hand in electoral competitions.

What these studies overlook, on the other hand, is the fact that the LDP's sustained dominance in the post-reform years was not of their own making. The critical difference between the LDP's 'dominances' between pre- and post-reform periods is the fact that the LDP's dominance in the Diet relied on coalition partners. In Lower House (LH, or *shūgiin*), the LDP failed to win a simple majority in four consecutive elections since the 1990s (1993, 1996, 2000, and 2003 elections). While the party's strength seemed to revive during the Koizumi administration (2001-2006) and Prime Minister Abe's second term (2012 to present), its predominance continued to be marred by consecutive losses in the Upper House (UH, or *sangiin*) elections: the LDP never won a simple majority in

nine UH elections held between 1989 and 2016.² Since its return to power in 1994, the LDP's dominance in the Diet has relied on the coalition partnership with its archenemies of the Cold War era: Japan Socialist Party (JSP) from 1994 to 1997, and then the Kōmeitō from 1999 and onwards. While the LDP's alliance with JSP was cantankerous and—to few people's surprise—short-lived, its partnership with the Kōmeitō proved to follow a completely different path. In a way, LDP's successful relationship with the Kōmeitō since 1999 was the key for the LDP's continuous dominance over Japanese politics after the collapse of the 1955 system. As the fortification of LDP's one-party predominance in the postwar years eroded with political scandals, fathomless economic stagnation, party split and ultimately the institutional reform in 1994, LDP was no longer able to maintain simple majorities in both Houses. The party strength of the Kōmeitō, who maintains about thirty seats in the House of Representatives (or Lower House, LH) and twenty in House of Councilors (or Upper House, UH), has been critical for the relatively equable management of the state affairs.

At the same time, it is no secret that the biggest objective of the LDP-Kōmeitō coalition rests upon 'electoral' aspect of cooperation, rather than the number-games in the Diet (Yakushiji 2016: 229-234; Nakano 2016; Shimada 2007: 162-164). The existing analyses of the two-party relations have focused on the 'efficacy' of electoral cooperation that takes place during national elections, based on which the LDP's acquiring of a simple majority has been made possible. Some studies suggest that, without the electoral cooperation with the Kōmeitō and Sōka Gakkai, the LDP would have single-handedly lost general elections to the largest opposition party as early as 2003 (Kabashima 2014: 371-387; Kawato 2004: 270-274). On the other hand, the reward for the Kōmeitō that comes from spending their electoral resources for the elections of LDP candidates is the opportunities to exercise influence over policies as a ruling party, an advantage it rarely enjoyed as a member of opposition alliance throughout the Cold War period.

Yet such simplistic 'power for seat' theorem breeds more questions than answers

² In 2016 UH election, LDP fell one seat behind securing a simple majority. Yet one elected member was given ex-post facto endorsement, making it the first UH election since 1989 in which the LDP secured a simple majority on its own.

because the LDP and the Kōmeitō are essentially ‘strange bedfellows,’ considering historical antagonism of the two parties. First, there is a question of why Kōmeitō chose to align with the LDP in 1999, when the history of Kōmeitō suggests that the party’s ideological as well as policy directions were closer to non-LDP oppositions throughout the postwar period.³ Even throughout the 1990s, Kōmeitō worked closely with non-LDP conservative parties, playing a significant part in the formation of New Frontier Party (NFP, 1994-1997). When the NFP disintegrated after a series of intra-party struggles and the old Kōmeitō members reorganized as the New Kōmeitō, it was the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), not the LDP, with whom they sought for the possibility of electoral alliance. Only a few months before the initiation of coalition government, then president of Kōmeitō Kanzaki Takenori claimed that it was only ‘natural’ for the Kōmeitō to carry out electoral cooperation with DPJ as a member of ‘opposition alliance.’⁴ In fact, the degree of ideological and policy incompatibilities between the LDP and the Kōmeitō remained significant even as coalition partners. According to the 2010 UTokyo-Asahi Survey (UTAS), the Kōmeitō Diet members can be characterized as ‘centrist-liberal’ in foreign, security, and social policy axis, while ‘traditional-centrist’ in economic policies. The LDP members, on the other hand, are ‘conservative’ in the former category and ‘traditional’ in the latter. In other words, the members of the two parties may agree on economic policies, while they stand opposite to one another in foreign, security, and social policy arenas. What is striking is the policy position of the members of the DPJ; in all policy arenas, their policy positions (centrist-liberal in foreign, security, and social policies and centrist-reformist in economic policies) are significantly closer to that of Kōmeitō’s.⁵ The LDP-Kōmeitō alliance, in other words, was not facilitated by the

³ Since its establishment in 1964, the Kōmeitō has advocated ‘welfare for the masses (*taishū fukushi*)’ as its core policy agenda. Calling themselves ‘party for the masses,’ the central focus of the Kōmeitō’s policy appeals rested on the promotion of economic and social welfare policies including price stabilization, anti-poverty measures, redistribution of income, nationalization of basic industries, and indirect control of the economy by the central government (White 1970: 143-151; Shimada 2007:62-64; Hasunuma and Klein 2014).

⁴ 朝日新聞 1999. 3. 6 朝刊 7頁

⁵ 谷口将紀=境家史郎=大川千寿=上ノ原秀晃. 「2010年参議院選挙—民主政権に吹く秋風？」『世界』第809号(2010年10月)pp. 58－69。

compatibility of policy preferences, as classic literatures on coalition formation suggest (Axelrod 1970; Leiserson 1966).

Such peculiarity of the two-party relationship leads to the second puzzle: Why has the LDP-Kōmeitō alliance been sustained, despite its unpopularity and electoral crises? When the coalition talks to incorporate Kōmeitō into the LDP-Liberal Party (LP) alliance began to surface in spring of 1999, it was criticized as LDP's 'number-crunching' 'life-prolonging treatment' under the twisted Diet, which failed to present concrete policy directions the to-be 'coalition government' would aspire to.⁶ In fact, few considered the partnership between the LDP and the Kōmeitō to be sustainable—the foundation was too volatile. First, the alliance with the Kōmeitō was very unpopular. According to Asahi Shimbun's opinion survey conducted in August 1999, 47% answered that the formation of LDP-LP-Kōmeitō coalition government was 'undesirable,' while 27% thought otherwise. Moreover, 70% thought it was 'wrong' for the Kōmeitō to shift their policy positions for the sake of cooperation with the LDP, while only 14% said it was 'understandable.'⁷ Second, the LDP itself was divided on the issue of coalition with the Kōmeitō. Specifically, the Kato and Yamazaki factions adamantly claimed that the coalition should remain outside the framework of cabinet coalition at the very least.⁸ Kato Koichi and Yamazaki Taku, who ran for presidential election of the LDP held shortly before the coalition partnership was officially launched, criticized Prime Minister Obuchi's decision as 'hasty and short-sighted.'⁹ Third, some of LDP's traditional support organizations, particularly religious groups, expressed strong antipathy toward the idea of coalition alliance with the Kōmeitō (Klein and Reed 2014). For example, Risshō Kōseikai, one of the longstanding adversaries of Sōka Gakkai who held the membership of more than two million households, warned the LDP Diet members that they would not support the candidates in the next election if they approved the coalition with the

⁶ 朝日新聞 1999. 5.15 社説「初めに枠組みありき 自自公協議」 5頁

⁷ 朝日新聞 1999. 8. 23 1-2頁

⁸ 朝日新聞 1999. 8. 23 2頁

⁹ 朝日新聞 1999. 8. 25 2頁

Kōmeitō.¹⁰ Shinto Association of Spiritual Leadership (*Shinto seiji renmei*) criticized LDP's lack of consistency, pointing to the fact that the LDP engaged in an extensive negative campaign against the Kōmeitō and Sōka Gakki not so long ago.¹¹ In a similar vein, Federation of New Religious Organizations of Japan also expressed their dismay with LDP's attempt to form an alliance with the Kōmeitō, claiming that it was “beyond comprehension.”¹²

Aside from the general lack of popular support, the commonly-found assessment that the LDP-Kōmeitō electoral alliance has always been invincible is inaccurate; the LDP-Kōmeitō coalition faced a series of electoral crises over the years as well. The first crises came after the 2000 general election—the first general election fought under the banner of LDP-Kōmeitō alliance. As it will be explored in detail in Chapter IV, the post-election analysis revealed that the LDP was saved by the vote mobilization from the Kōmeitō supporters, while the Kōmeitō benefitted little from the electoral cooperation. In fact, the dissatisfied Kōmeitō sought possibility for cooperation with other political groups, such as *Rengō*, the largest support organization of the DPJ, holding regular policy council meetings soon after the election was over. Another crisis came after the 2009 election, in which the LDP-Kōmeitō coalition was overthrown by the DPJ who became the first political party in Japan's postwar history that defeated the LDP single-handedly. The discord between the coalition parties was salient even before the general election, as the Kōmeitō grew nervous about the unpopularity of the Aso cabinet in the aftermath of global financial crisis. The tension was even more heightened when PM Asō put off the dissolution of the Lower House for the fear of losing against Ozawa-led DPJ, despite the pressure from the Kōmeitō who did not wish to have Tokyo metropolitan assembly election (which was to be held in July 2009) so close to the general election. The devastating result of the 2009 general election held only a few weeks after the Tokyo assembly election hit the Kōmeitō hard, who ended up losing all eight district candidates. During the three-year period under the DPJ government that followed, the Kōmeitō

¹⁰ 朝日新聞 1999.7.3 7頁

¹¹ 朝日新聞 1999.7.4 2頁

¹² 朝日新聞 1999.7.22 7頁

searched for the possibility of arranging cooperative partnership with the DPJ and its support organization beneath the surface (Nakano 2016: 88-125). In other words, it was not the unwavering “electoral success” per se that explains why the LDP and Kōmeitō, two parties that do not necessarily share the similar policy preferences, have maintained their relationship. In fact, one aspect that highlights the uniqueness of this two-party coalition is the fact that the two parties remained as ‘alliance partners’ even when they fell out of ruling coalition after the electoral loss in the 2009 general election.

The purpose of this study is to elucidate how the LDP and Kōmeitō managed to institutionalize a sustainable electoral alliance despite a number of jeopardizing factors—from antagonistic history, policy and ideological mismatches, to electoral crises. Specifically, this study excavates the ‘electoral cartel’—a system of electoral dominance constructed mostly in the urban regions—that has allowed the LDP to overcome ‘new urban challenges’ emerged after the 1994 electoral system reform. As the LDP system of rural-biased political-economic system began to fail, LDP’s vulnerability in the urban electoral competition became increasingly compensated by the Kōmeitō’s highly urban-biased organized votes. While the ‘electoral’ aspect of LDP-Kōmeitō alliance is often highlighted as the foundation of the two-party coalition government, however, there has been a general lack of detailed analysis of this inter-party electoral relations. Most of all, these studies failed to highlight the dynamism of the two-party electoral alliance, which, unlike conventional perception of two-party relations as centralized bartering of votes, is characterized by the mechanism of ‘flexible adaptation’ to changing electoral environment that becomes apparent in the forms of both temporal and regional variations in the executions of ‘electoral cooperation.’ By illuminating not only upon the institutional setting but also the transformations and varieties of electoral alliance between the LDP and the Kōmeitō, this study sheds light on how such flexibility has sustained LDP’s electoral dominance over the past two decades.

2. Literature Review

The establishment of LDP-Kōmeitō coalition government must be contextualized within the changes in electoral environment after the electoral system reform in 1994.

The core purpose of electoral reforms enacted under the non-LDP coalition government was, simply stated, to dismantle what had sustained the LDP's one-party dominance throughout the postwar period. Under the 1955 system, the LDP was essentially a 'rural party' established upon clientalist relationship between individual politicians, who poured subsidies and public projects to economically dependent rural areas and interest groups—mainly agricultural sector—who, in return, gathered under the politicians' organizational machine. The system, accumulated throughout the Cold War period, was the product of continuous mutual reinforcements of rural-biased political and economic systems. Throughout the period of economic growth between the 1960s and the 1980s, the rural biases were implanted both by malapportionment and high political participation among rural residents, and also facilitated by the development of LDP's internal party management that induced power concentrations on those who were elected from rural regions (Kabashima 2014; Sugawara 2004).

The electoral strength of the LDP under the 1955 system was assigned, above anything else, to the rural-biased district malapportionment. Monopolizing the decision-making power, the LDP leadership never carried out a fundamental reapportionment process. Yet as a part of 1994 electoral system reform, the newly established Lower House Council on Reapportionment (*shugiin senkyoku kakutei iinkai*, 衆議院選挙区画定委員会) became the key organ to redress the rural-biased electoral system. Under this council, the district malapportionment was significantly modified, which led to the relative decline of the value of rural votes and increase of urban votes (McElwain 2012). Sugawara (2009) demonstrates that, with reapportionment, the LDP was forced to give up as many as twenty seats they had benefitted from the district malapportionment under the MMD/SNTV system, pointing out that the 1994 electoral system reform significantly reduced vote-seat disparity.

The question, then, is how the LDP manage to sustain its electoral dominance after the series of drastic electoral system reform. Scholars have explored this issue from a variety of perspectives, and it is possible to find largely three approaches in deciphering this puzzling phenomenon: (1) loopholes in electoral system reform and the pervasive opposition failure; (2) changes in the nature of electoral competition in urban districts;

and (3) the role of the Kōmeitō in urban electoral competition. This section sheds light on each of these points, and illuminates the limitations embedded in each of these approaches.

1) **Opposition Failure Caused by Loopholes in New Electoral System**

One of the most popular explanations for the prolonged LDP dominance in the post-reform years is that the electoral system reforms were essentially insufficient in going so far as ‘dismantling’ the LDP’s electoral foundations. As Christensen (1994) had foreseen, two decades after the electoral reform, it is still questionable whether Japan’s party politics is truly transforming into a competitive two-party system based on parties’ policy proposals as the reformists had hoped. Under the old electoral system, Japan’s party system was characterized as ‘predominant one-party system’ (Sartori 1976) or, by those who considered pervasive factionalism within the LDP in the context of multi-party competition, it had been examined as ‘multi-party system’ (Machidori 2015). The new electoral system which consists largely of single-member district competition was expected to bring about the two-party system, which had been believed to be the ideal way of party competition (Miyake 2001: 11-13; Curtis 1999: 140-145).¹³ Throughout the 2000s, as the DPJ gained recognition as the ‘alternative’ to the LDP, some scholars claimed that Japan was heading towards the two-party system (Reed 2007; Tanaka 2009: 28-31). Yet the results of the 2012 and 2014 general elections divided the opinions as to whether Japan’s party system can indeed be characterized as two-party system, or it is on its way back to multi-party system (Machidori 2015: 125, Rosenbluth and Thies 2012:101). With the decline of the DPJ, the share of seats by two largest parties is declining, while the number of effective parties increased—hinting to the reinstitution of

¹³ Theoretically, under the SM system, the party votes become more relevant (as opposed to personal votes) because a party only endorses one candidate in each district, and the voters will be inclined to choose based on their policy preferences (Cox 1997). Further, because the value of party label increases, the party endorsements become critical in determining the candidates’ status as well as campaign resources, leading to the higher level of centralization of power by the party leadership. In other words, the reformists hoped that the series of political reform would induce the rise of competitive two-party system as well as the party-based, ‘clean’ competition based on policies.

multi-partism.

From the beginning, some were skeptical as to whether the new electoral system would bring about the competitive two-party system that centered on policy competitions. As Curtis puts it, it was the ‘idea’ of reform that drove the political reformists in the 1990s, rather than the validity of their claims:

The political mood in Japan in the early 1990s was not conducive to rational arguments about the costs and benefits of the Japan’s long-existing electoral system or proposals to modify rather than abolish it. ... It became impossible to consider political reform without electoral reform. The claim that Japan could only achieve party-centered, policy-oriented, less-costly elections and develop a more competitive party system if it abolished the system of single-entry ballots and multimember districts was transformed from a debatable thesis into a commonly embraced assumption (Curtis 1999: 144-145).

Similarly, Christensen (1994) once provisioned that, despite the reform measures enacted in 1994, the extent of political realignment in terms of creating the competitive two-party system might remain dubious. He argued that, first, the realization of two-party system could be hindered by a couple of factors such as the PR system (through which smaller parties may well survive) and the incapacity of the opposition parties to come to terms with one another in order to form a permanent alliance. Second, the fight against political corruption, including the termination of factionalism, may not succeed because of latent loopholes in the anti-corruption agenda, pointing out the possibility that the future candidates may continue to rely on their stable ‘local’ support and alliances, rather than on ‘party platforms’ (Christensen 1994: 602-603).

On the other hand, the introduction of the mixed electoral system did initiate party realignment in post-reform Japan among non-LDP conservatives.¹⁴ The formation of the New Frontier Party in 1994 and the rise of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) since the late-1990s are best understood as the phenomena induced by the new institutional setting. The opposition alignment centering on the DPJ was, at least for the moment,

¹⁴ Duverger theorized that, while in pure PR system the political parties remain mostly autonomous, the “simple-majority second-ballot system encourages the formation of close alliances” as well as the “electoral alliances” (Duverger 1954: 325-326): A candidate from a weak party tends to withdraw, or ‘stand down,’ in simple-majority competition, while arranging a reciprocal relationship in the second-ballot portion.

consolidated in 2003, when the Ozawa group from the former New Frontier Party (*Shinshintō*), who had formed Liberal Party (*jiyūyō*), joined the largest opposition party. An analysis of the development of the DPJ shows that, starting in the second half of the 1990s, the DPJ continued to increase its vote gains in PR districts in both Lower and Upper House elections.¹⁵ In 1998 Upper House election, the ratio of LDP's total vote gains to that of DPJ (in PR districts) is approximately 25 to 22 (Park 2014: 20-67). In addition, under the new electoral system, the growth of the DPJ also brought about head-on competitions between the two largest conservative parties in single-member districts starting in the early 2000s.

However, such 'opposition realignment' is far from being consolidated. As the above skepticism had expressed, the opposition realignment among the non-LDP conservatives hit the deadlock with the disintegration of DPJ in 2012, and even further complicated by the recent rise of local parties such as Osaka Restoration Association (Japan Restoration Association) and Tokyo Tomin First (and its national counterpart, Party of Hope). Further, other minor parties, including the Kōmeitō and Japan Communist Party, have survived political restructuring. Put differently, even though Japan's party system appeared to be heading towards two-party system, it continued to be characterized by multi-partism. What is significant, on the other hand, is the fact that the party coherence within the LDP had heightened due to centralization effect of the new electoral rules, whose sustained supremacy is supplemented by increasingly fragmented opposition forces.

Why, then, has the opposition fragmentation persevered and, by extension, allowed the prolonged dominance of the LDP? 'Opposition failure' is an old problem in Japan's party competition. Scheiner (2006) demonstrated how the clientalist practices and centralized government financial structure led to the local opposition failure, inducing party competition failure at national level. In terms of post-reform opposition realignment, Ootake (1999) claimed that the opposition forces that emerged after the collapse of the JSP were unable to propose a policy axis that has been attractive enough to induce voter realignment, as the leftist ideology in national security issues lost

legitimacy in post-Cold War era.

In terms of institutional flaws embedded in electoral systems, perhaps the most popular explanations for the survivals of minor parties and consequent opposition fragmentation after the electoral reform have been based on the loopholes in electoral system reform, namely the problem of ‘double candidacy’ and the ‘PR system.’ The system of dual candidacies in SMD and the PR tier, in which the candidate who lost in single-member competition may be ‘revived’ based on ‘losing ratio’ in accordance with the party’s ‘closed list,’ has motivated the political parties to field candidates even when the chances of winning the SM competition is slim. McKean and Scheiner (2000) argued that the dual candidacy in the mixed electoral system would eventually defeat the purpose of electoral reform, and bring back the local-oriented, candidate-oriented styles of election.¹⁶ Similarly, Reed and Shimizu (2009) analyzed that one of LDP’s strategies in “avoiding” two-party system is to utilize PR tier and electoral cooperation with the Komeitō, through which the LDP becomes able to elect two candidates in one single-member district (2009: 34-40). Others argue that the reason why smaller parties do not always pull away from the SMDs is rooted in the ‘mutual effects’ of combined electoral system: the small parties remain reluctant to pull away from SMDs in the fear of lagging behind in the mobilization of supporters in the PR tiers as well. This could impede the realization of two-party competitions in the SMDs and become the cause of sustained multi-partism in a long run (Tatebayashi, Soga, and Machidori 2008: 84-85).

Recently, another explanation for the lack of integration among the opposition forces has gained prominence. The advocates of ‘unequal electoral systems hypothesis’ (*senkyo seido fukinitsu kasetsu*, 選挙制度不均一仮説) argue that the realization of two-party system is hindered by the differing electoral systems between the national and local elections, which cause the ‘mismatches’ of electoral districts throughout multi-level politics (Uekami 2013). Specifically, because the local elections (prefectural and municipal) continue to adopt multi-member district system in accordance with, for the

¹⁶ The electoral arrangement between the two parties—in which the Komeitō supporters vote for the LDP and single-member districts and vice versa in PR tier—is the reason why the Komeitō has been able to remain as a viable third-party (Reed and Shimizu 2009: 37).

most part, old electoral districts, the local politicians continue to dwell on the traditional way of cultivating personal networks that are highly candidate-based. Further, intra-party rivalries among the local LDP politicians in multi-member system have deprived the formation of coherent local party organizations, and because of the perpetual high reliance of the Diet members on local support organizations (centered on local party politicians), the Diet members continue to prioritize their roles as ‘pipelines’ to the center, putting off the consolidation of local party branches (Hiwatari, 2007). Hiwatari concludes that, without the realignment of *keiretsu* relationship between national and local politicians, the fundamental consolidation of two-party system would not be realized.

Behind such emphasis on how local/regional electoral system affect higher level of polity lays the growing attentions paid to reconsider the assumption that local politics is subordinate to state politics.¹⁷ Similar to the case of Europe, the series of political reform throughout the 1990s and 2000s reshaped the center-local relationship in Japan. The promotion of decentralization policies under the Koizumi administration (2001-2006) was, among anything else, aimed at reducing tax allocations to local governments as the Japanese government suffered from expanding tax spending on welfare policies and government bond. This ‘encouragement’ of local governments’ independence from the central government was accompanied by the promotion of administrative autonomy of local governments as well as the enhancement of governor’s authority, which became increasingly prominent in larger, financially well-off cities.¹⁸ In other words, the

¹⁷ Deschuwer (2006), Schakel and Jeffery (2012), and Jeffery and Hough (2003), among others, question the understanding of regional elections as ‘second-order’ elections (as opposed to national elections as ‘first-order’ elections).¹⁷ They equally criticize the notion of regional elections (or in their analysis, European Council election as well) as mere ‘barometer election’ or ‘midterm referendum’ whose significance only lies in its nature of ‘punishing’ or ‘rewarding’ the political performance of the central government. Instead, they argue, regional elections operate around its own logics and mechanism of political representations as well as unique regional issues, which are often unassociated with the political matters of the state. Hopkin (2003) demonstrated that the political decentralization in Europe increased the level of regional autonomy, and such center-periphery tensions as well as institutional reforms altered the ways parties organize themselves and the kinds of electoral strategies they adopt.

¹⁸ In this context, the rise of local parties represents the rebalancing of center-local power

rebalancing of center-local relations and the consequent ‘denationalization’ of local governments, as well as the rise of new type of local leadership led to the reconfiguration of clientalist relationship between the national and local politicians. Coupled with ‘mismatched’ electoral districts in local and national elections, the advocates of ‘unequal electoral systems hypothesis’ argue that pervasiveness of multi-party system in the Diet is the result of heightened inter-/intra-party conflicts on the local level, which have been triggered by the changing governor-assembly relations as well as the enhanced administrative authority of local governments (Horiuchi and Natori 2007).

Despite its analytical advantages, however, ‘unequal electoral system hypothesis’ lacks general empirical evidences in explaining the linkage between the local and national elections or in pinpointing how local party systems affect the levels of cooperation/conflict on the national inter-party relations. More importantly, the above hypothesis does not explain why the ‘party fragmentation’ at the national level only perseveres among the oppositions, not within the LDP. Whether LDP had managed to integrate its local support bases, which were characterized largely by the network of personal support bases, needs to be examined, along with the mechanism of LDP’s party coherence which seemed to have significantly increased after the electoral system reform. Put differently, the continuous party coherence of the LDP, despite the ‘mismatches’ of the electoral districts between local and national institutions, brings about the question of whether the nature of LDP’s party organization, centered around personal networks of individual politicians rather than local party branches, has truly been transformed by the new electoral rules.

relations in recent years. With the economic decline and lesser resources pouring from the state to local governments, the conflicts between local assembly members and governors/mayors were heightened, which led to growing number of governor/mayor-led local parties that emerged starting in the 2000s (Hijino 2013). What these newly emerging local political parties have in common is their emphasis on locality as well as detachment from existing (national) political parties. (Sunahara and Hijino 2013). The governor-assembly relations, in other words, have been complicated by the replacement of local leadership with the new type of local governors whose autonomy has been expanded. In addition, the local politicians began finding it more necessary to negotiate with local leadership, rather than the Diet members, in order to realize their political goals.

2) **Changes in the Nature of Urban Electoral Competition**

While those who focus on the ‘loopholes’ of electoral systems in unravelling the LDP’s prolonged dominance tend to emphasize the internal adaptations to the changing institutional settings, others shed light on the changes in people’s voting behaviors, highlighting the changes in the nature of electoral competition in Japan, and LDP’s successful adaptation to them as the key element that has enabled its prolonged dominance. There are two major changes in electoral environments that are discussed as the consequences of the new electoral rules: ‘party-centered competition’ and ‘electoral urbanization.’ The two changes are indeed correlated phenomenon, which derives from the socio-demographic changes that came to be reflected on the new districting rule.

One of the central objectives of the electoral system reform was to realize party-centered, policy-oriented electoral competition, eliminating the clientalist relationship between individual politicians and local interest groups which were thought to be the hotbed of money politics and corruptions. Those ‘interest groups’ are often talked about in terms of LDP candidates’ local support bases, which consist of *keiretsu* local politicians and industries, intermediary groups, as well as personal *kōenkai*. It was through these institutions LDP candidates mobilized their personal support, and it had been largely established that the LDP supporters voted largely based on their personal connections or communal identities, rather than on the specific policy preferences (Inoue 1992; Curtis 1972; Bestor 1989). The organizational cohesiveness of LDP politicians’ personal *kōenkai* under the old electoral system was one of the core factors that enabled LDP’s long-term dominance before 1993, despite slow decline of party support throughout the 70s and on (MacDougall 1980). At the same time, such decentralized characteristics of LDP’s party organization went hand-in-hand with the rural-biased old districting rule. Having served as one of the key factors that facilitated rural-biased ‘LDP system’ under the 1955 system, the higher political participations among rural residents in comparison to urban voters was a unique phenomenon that justified LDP government’s unequal distribution of political and economic resources into rural economies throughout the Cold War period (Kabashima 2014; Sugawara 2004).

As a new institution, the electoral system introduced in 1994 was expected to

debacle, or at least reshape, such mechanism of vote organization by inducing party-based competitions and giving weight to urban voters.¹⁹ First, by implementing single-member district system, the elections were expected to become party-based, rather than candidate-based, competition. Because the voters would be making voting decisions based on party label, rather than candidate's personal resources, the electoral competitions were expected to become contests among parties based on policy orientations (Carey and Shugart 1995; Cox 1997). Second, the new districting rules were meant to redress not only the rural-biased malapportionment but also to mollify irrational public spending on rural economies. As the Japanese economy suffered from downturn and national deficit accumulated exponentially, the pork-barrel politics that only sheltered rural populace not only lost political legitimacy but also became impossible to pursuit (Rosenbluth and Theis 2010: 134-139). Coupled with the increase in the relative value of urban votes, the political parties came to face the necessity of cultivating support bases in urban districts. More importantly, the urbanization of elections after the 1994 reform made it necessary for the political parties to win in urban districts in order to secure influence in the Diet.

The question, then, is how the LDP overcame its inherent urban weakness and has managed to win enough seats to maintain dominance in the Diet (except for the 2009 general election). To be sure, the LDP had been aware of the economic and political burdens of focusing too much on rural regions before the electoral reform became an issue. Particularly, the party was aware that the malapportionment must be dealt with sooner or later, and more importantly, the LDP must cultivate new support bases in urban regions in order to carry out efficient and effective expansion of party strength (Ishikawa and Hirose 1989: 98). LDP's sense of crises that derived from rural overrepresentation may be what was behind PM Koizumi's drives for political reform, which as a result ended up 'cutting-off' its rural supporters, weakening the LDP's clientalist relationship

¹⁹ Tanaka and Martin (2003) defined the concept of 'new independent voters' as the group of 'anti-partisan independents and ex-partisan independents,' who were overrepresented in the urban areas and had made up more than 50% of voting population in Japan by the mid-1990s (Tanaka and Martin 2003).

with its traditional supporters and interest groups (Reed, Scheiner, and Thies 2012).²⁰

On the other hand, it is questionable whether the LDP has succeeded in ‘cultivating’ or expanding support bases in urban districts after the implementation of new electoral rules. Instead, the LDP’s electoral success, particularly in urban districts, is often discussed in line with the voting behaviors of so-called ‘swing voters,’ and how the LDP leadership succeeded in attracting them (or failed to do so in case of the 2009 election). McElwain (2012), analyzing the magnitude of incumbency advantage and the relative weight of rural votes in post-reform elections, argues that the Japanese elections are increasingly becoming ‘nationalized,’ meaning that the electoral results are determined increasingly by the trends of the swing voters (or their policy preferences) rather than by the incumbents’ personal local networks. He also demonstrates that “the declining value of rural votes” after the electoral reform, “rising percentage of independent votes,” along with “the greater sensitivity of election contests to partisan swings” have produced an electoral environment that is no longer LDP-friendly (McElwain 2012: 340). While Tanaka and Martin (2003) assigned the LDP’s electoral superiority that persisted even after the electoral reform owed to its organizational advantage, the results of the 2005 and 2009 general elections seemed convincing enough that it was the non-partisan voters, not the organized votes, who determined the electoral results. Some argue that the growing influence of ‘floating voters’ indicated the ‘nationalization’ of electoral competition, which diminished the local-oriented election campaign (McElwain 2012).²¹

²⁰ Reed, Scheiner, and Thies (2012) argues that, despite the encroachment of the DPJ (who had already been popular in urban districts) into the LDP’s patron districts, the LDP was able to win a landslide victory in 2005 general election because of Koizumi’s tactics to ‘nationalizing’ the election by focusing on single political issue (i.e. postal reform), to which the urban ‘swing voters’ largely responded to. From another perspective, however, the LDP’s landslide victory in 2005 despite its declining rural support bases implied that the urban votes mattered more than the rural support in winning elections.

²¹ Caramani defines ‘nationalization process’ as follows: “Nationalization processes represent a broad historical evolution toward the formation of national electorates and party systems, party organizations and campaigns, as well as issues and party programs. Through nationalization processes, the highly localized and territorialized politics that characterized the early phases of electoral competition in the nineteenth century is replaced by national electoral alignments and oppositions. Peripheral and regional specificities disappear, and sectional cleavages progressively transform into nationwide functional alignments. Through the development of central party organizations, local candidates are absorbed into

Tanaka's analysis also claims that it was the same body of nonpartisan voters (*mutōha sō*) that led the LDP to the landslide victory in 2005, and then to its devastating defeat against the DPJ in 2009 (Tanaka 2009: 10-11; Kono 2009); in other words, the floating voters—who do not have specific party affiliation in their voting behaviors—are the key to electoral success.

Even though these studies stress the growing importance of 'floating voters' and how this pool of electorates play significant roles in determining the results of 'nationalized elections,' they are limited by at least two empirical realities. First, the question arises as to whether the 'floating voters' can be accounted for the election outcomes when the turnout rate is low. The problem is that the 'floating voters' do not always vote. In fact, even though the two elections held in 2005 and 2009 were characterized by high turnout rates of 67.51% and 69.28%, respectively, the three general elections that followed marked one of the lowest records (59.32% in 2012, 52.66% in 2014, and 53.68% in 2017). Second, the argument for 'electoral nationalization' cannot account for the opposition fragmentation that accelerated after 2012, and it certainly does not eliminate the possible reliance of the candidates on their personal networks in cultivating their votes. In other words, the weight of swing voters must be considered *in addition to* the already-established support bases of each candidate, rather than eliminating the significance of the latter altogether. Japan's election law only allows the 'official' campaign period of twelve days, which are essentially the only time the candidates may appeal to the 'floating voters.'

In fact, some scholars have questioned whether the new electoral system indeed diminished the importance of "locality" in national elections. Stockwin (1999), for example, argues that "local commitment" remained crucial even after 1994; most LDP candidates who competed in the same electoral district in the old electoral system essentially divided smaller, new electoral districts among themselves so that their

nationwide structures and ideologies. Programs and policies become national in scope and cancel out—or at least reduce—the scope of local problems, with the most relevant issues being transferred from the local to the national level. These processes of political integration translate in the territorial homogenization of electoral behavior, both election participation and the support for the main party families." (Caramani 2004: 1)

constituencies would “at least in part fell within the boundaries of old districts” (Stockwin 1999: 139). In his analysis of election campaign of an LDP first-time runner for District Tokyo 17 in the 1996 Lower House election, Park (2000) argues that the candidate’s reliance on his personal support base as well as local intermediary interest groups expanded, rather than diminished, because of the newly emerging needs to cast a net as wide as possible within the district under the new electoral system (Park 2000: 64-87, 120). McKean and Scheiner (2004) also discusses the possibility that the PR tier would induce the return of ‘localism’ and personal campaigns among the candidates, hindering policy-based competitions. Krauss and Pekkanen (2004) finds that the Diet members are pressured to develop their own personal support base, or *kōenkai*, especially when they are running in the districts where the LDP is not particularly popular. They argue that such necessity of cultivating personal votes (as opposed to party votes) stems from the fact that, because of the LDP’s lack of local party branches and the people’s unwillingness to identify themselves with particular political party, the candidates must muster a large number of votes from non-LDP supporters (Krauss and Pekkanen 2004: 10-13).

In other words, even though the weight of floating voters significantly increased in the post-reform elections, the LDP candidates continued to rely on their personal local networks. However, while the LDP candidates’ reliance on their own personal support bases is maintained, the relative supply of solid support continued to decline, especially in urban areas (Sugawara 2009: 24-25). Analyzing the membership of LDP’s *kōenkai* nationwide, Sugawara argues that the attenuation of agriculture industry as well as aging population of the first industry have led to the declining vote-collecting ability of the LDP after the 1990s in rural areas, and the relative increase of turnout rate in urban districts accelerated the devaluation of rural votes.²² In other words, the stability of

²² Also, as the 1994 electoral reform terminated the intra-party competitions among the LDP candidates, it reduced the overall vote-collecting ability of the LDP, especially in those areas where there had been multiple LDP candidates under the old electoral system. Before the 1990s, the voting rates in rural districts were significantly higher than those of urban districts, because of the dense clientalist relationship between the LDP politicians and the rural population. After the electoral reform, however, the turnout rates in urban districts increased while that of rural districts decreased, and combined with the devaluation of rural districts,

LDP's vote-collecting capability in urban districts cannot be explained by the behaviors of the 'floating voters' nor simply by the mobilization of personal support bases alone; rather, the source of organized support comes from its coalition partner and its most organized pool of votes in Japan's political market.

3) **Urban Competition and Role of the Kōmeitō**

One of the few things that scholars equally acknowledge as the significant alteration in the nature of electoral competition after the 1994 reform is that increasing weight on the 'urban districts' in determining the overall electoral results. In general, urban voters are more difficult to organize because of loose communal identities and local networks that bind their behaviors.²³ Yet not all social groups in urban communities are immune to political and social networking. Sōka Gakkai, the Kōmeitō's support organization, is perhaps one of the most coherent socio-political organization with highly centralized capacity for vote mobilization. The Kōmeitō's organized support base, concentrated in urban regions, is what supplemented LDP's lack of organizational advantages in urban regions and, in countless occasions, sustained its dominance in the electoral competitions. Despite the criticality of the LDP-Kōmeitō electoral alliance in explaining the LDP's sustained dominance after 1999, however, there is scarcity of academic works that deal with this two-party relationship.

The uniqueness of the LDP-Kōmeitō coalition government rests on the fact that the partnership is based on electoral alliance, rather than the result of post-election inter-party negotiation on government formation. In other words, the coalition formation takes place *before* the election, rather than as a result of post-electoral coalition negotiation. While a wide range of coalition theories exist that attempt to explain why certain set of parties come to form a coalition government instead of others, few have discussed the

this phenomenon enhanced the importance of 'urban votes' in national elections.

²³ Tanaka and Martin implied that these 'floating voters' can be subject of organization, yet there exists an inherent difficulty because of the short time frame, and even if the candidates attempt to 'organize' this politically engaged population, they are constrained to do so outside the official campaign period. Sugawara (2009) argues that even though the electoral reform curtailed intra-party competitions within districts, the candidate-based elections "remain as it always has been" (Sugawara 2009: 40).

‘electoral’ aspect of party coalition and how it relates to the post-electoral government-level interparty relationship. That there is a correlation between party coalition and electoral alliance was first suggested by Duverger (1954: 325), who distinguished electoral alliance from parliamentary or governmental alliances. He argued that the dominant factor that influences the formation of electoral alliance is the electoral regime, and suggested that the electoral alliance takes place divergently depending on the electoral system, while not all electoral alliances lead to party alliance. Further, unlike other forms of party alliances, they tend to be carried out implicitly rather than explicitly, and locally rather than nationally. While he puts forth several forms of inter-party cooperation that could appear during elections, such as drawing of joint list/candidate at the first ballot and reciprocal standing down at the second, he does not provide systematic framework to analyze the relationship between electoral alliance and party alliance.

Recent studies on ‘pre-electoral coalition (PEC),’ on the other hand, have attempted to configure the correlation between electoral alliance and coalition formation. Some focus on pre-electoral candidate coordination in Western European states who adopt proportional representation system, while others analyze the correlation between electoral system and the pre-electoral coalition (Shepsle and Bonckec 1997; Golder 2005; Flemming et.al 2014; Tilman 2015). What these studies commonly put forward is the critical aspect of institutional setting in inducing electoral—and consequently party—alliance. Put another way, depending on the electoral system, the ways in which parties engage in electoral alliance—and form coalition government—would vary. However, most observations on the electoral cooperation among parties are limited to the analysis of conditions under which the political parties or specific candidates choose to ‘stand down’ or, in some cases, run partial joint list under the system of proportional representation. In other words, the mechanisms of cooperation in these analyses highlight the passivity of the parties and/or the candidates, as well as the implicit and limited nature of electoral alliances in general. The reason for the passive and implicit nature of electoral cooperation seems to lay in the problem of party/candidate identity. Under the proportional representation system, on the one hand, running a complete and outright

joint list would bring the risk of blurring party identity. On the other hand, expressing support for another candidate as the candidate ‘stands down’ is, to borrow Duverger’s words, “more effective but more embarrassing” (Duverger 1954: 331). In other words, such compromises may take place in certain districts, yet it is unlikely that such inter-party negotiation would be carried out nationally.

On the other hand, an example of explicit and nation-wide electoral alliance among parties can be found under the electoral system that adopts two-vote system. The works of Roberts (1988) and Pappi and Thurner (2002) deal with the electoral strategy that took place under the two-vote system in (West) Germany and, unlike other cases, in nation-wide scale where parties openly advocate strategic voting. Roberts (1988) illuminates the explicit electoral campaign by a small-sized Free Democratic Party (FDP) under the two-vote system in West Germany, and how a small party who is virtually the only potential coalition partner to the two largest parties (Christian Democrats and Social Democrats) can advocate ‘split voting’ to the supporters other than their own. While the FDP has no real prospects of winning in constituencies as a small party, its chance of survival as a national political party rests on securing 5% threshold in the ‘second vote’ (party vote). In order to achieve this goal, the FDP declares to form a coalition government either with the CDU or SPD, depending on the political circumstances at that time, prior to the election. According to Roberts’ analysis, the party has largely succeeded with this strategy of appealing to the supporters of future coalition partner in reaching the 5% threshold. Pappi and Thurner (2002), on the other hand, argued that, while there are many possible explanations to it, some voters engage in split-voting in part in order to express their coalition preference. This argument is in line with the idea of pre-electoral coalition as ‘signaling device’ to inform the voters with the type of government they can expect once the election is over (Golder 2005).

The case of electoral alliance based on explicit encouragement on ‘split voting’ may be what comes closest to the case of LDP-Kōmeitō electoral coalition, in terms of sizes of relevant parties involved in electoral alliance, as well as electoral system that gives voters two votes to be exercised simultaneously. While there are still quite significant differences between the electoral systems adopted in post-1994 Japan and

Germany,²⁴ the case of German electoral system provides insight to how the electoral system provides incentives under particular conditions for both parties and voters in designing their electoral and voting strategies.

At the same time, such ‘encouragement’ of split-voting does not account for the perspective of larger parties—in this case, CDU or SPD. In other words, the incentives for larger parties to encourage split-voting for their supporters require further evaluation. While the small parties such as the FDP has the incentives to encourage split-voting in the anticipation of ‘rewards’ that may derive from electoral cooperation, the incentives of the larger parties like the CDU or SPD is to muster as many votes as possible in the PR, according to which the number of seats in *Bundestag* is determined. In other words, the reason why larger parties—if in fact they do—encourage split-voting remains unexplored in those works. The vague promise of future coalition government would only question the depth of commitment by the participating parties, especially under the circumstances where the prospects for electoral results are dim. It is perhaps more accurate to assume that the priory goal of the small party is to pass the 5% threshold in order to remain in the parliament, while that of large parties is to simply present post-electoral posture of government coalition in order to appease public’s fear of political instability. In other words, the formation of electoral alliance must be understood as much the result of institutional setting deriving from the electoral rule as the maximization of electoral performance, rather than as the preliminary arrangements of a certain coalition government. Put differently, there is no theoretical backbone in taking a priori assumption of ‘coalition government’ before the formation of electoral alliance.

The case of LDP-Kōmeitō coalition, on the other hand, is exemplary in illuminating how the institutional setting provides the ground for electoral alliance, leading to the sustainable and stable operation of coalition government. Conventionally, the mechanism of electoral cooperation between the LDP and the Kōmeitō is often summarized into a simple phrase: “LDP for district, Kōmei for PR” (*senkyokuha jimin*,

²⁴ For example, the German electoral system requires 5% vote share for political party to be given seats in the parliament, and the seat share in Bundestag is determined by the vote share in proportional representation.

hireiha koumei); simply put, the supporters of the two parties are encouraged to split their votes between SMD and PR tiers. The rationale is that, since the Kōmeitō is a small party and fields only a limited number of candidates in SMDs (generally eight to ten district candidates), the Kōmeitō supporters vote for the LDP candidate in their district, while they expect the LDP to return the favor by asking their supporters to vote for the Kōmeitō in PR. Based on the Kōmeitō's vote counts in PR, and taking the Kōmeitō supporters' high level of coherence into account, some estimate that about 20,000 to 30,000 Kōmeitō votes are delivered to each LDP candidate in every district.²⁵ To illustrate how crucial Kōmeitō support would mean for a candidate running in SMDs, let us take an example from the 2003 LH election. The average number of votes casted in each of 300 single-member districts was about 204,000,²⁶ which means that, if a candidate could secure about 100,000 votes, his/her election was almost certainly guaranteed. If we assume that the Kōmeitō could mobilize 20,000 votes in each district, these organized votes make up for 20% of required number of votes for a candidate to get elected. Such leverage the Kōmeitō possesses would even enhance further in the districts where competitions are close, as well as in urban districts where votes are relatively harder to organize given the floating tendency of the urban voters (Tanaka and Martin 2003).²⁷ As it will be explored in Chapter III, the Kōmeitō's reward, on the other hand, derives from electoral cooperation from the LDP in proportional representation.

One of the most prevalent explanations given to the sustainability of the LDP-Kōmeitō alliance is such efficacy of electoral cooperation between the two parties under the new electoral rule implemented in 1994. Under the non-LDP eight-party coalition government, the Diet passed a set of political reform bills that centered on the electoral reform and political fund controls, presenting new electoral challenges against both the

²⁵ This calculation is based on Kōmeitō's vote gains in PR during national elections, which usually range between seven to nine million votes. Divided by the number of single-member districts (300), the Kōmeitō is said to have about twenty to thirty-thousand votes in each of the single-member districts.

²⁶ The total number of casted votes was 61,196,418 nationwide (turnout rate 59.6%)

²⁷ Tanaka and Martin (2003) defined the concept of 'new independent voters' as the group of 'anti-partisan independents and ex-partisan independents,' who were overrepresented in the urban areas and had made up more than 50% of voting population in Japan by the mid-1990s (Tanaka and Martin 2003).

LDP and the Kōmeitō, which became a motivation for the two parties to come together as coalition partners. The old electoral system of multi-member district system (MMD) was replaced by the combined system of single-member district system (SMD, 300 seats) and proportional representation (PR, 200 seats then reduced to 180). The new rule was expected to not only put an end to the LDP-friendly, rural-biased electoral system, but also to bring about competitive two-party system, eliminating clientelist practices that derived from factionalism (Miyake 2001; Hiwatari 2007).

The degree of success in terms of political reform aside, the electoral reform brought two major changes to the nature of electoral competition in Japan. First, the new electoral system that centers on SMD system, which was expected to induce party realignment and reduce the effective number of parties, invited opposition realignment, as well as the higher election threshold. Simply put, a candidate came to face the necessity of mobilizing more number of votes by taking maximizing strategy, rather than the minimalist strategy they undertook under the multi-member district system (Park 2000: 67). The LDP candidates, who were able to rely simply on one's own *kōenkai* to get elected (Curtis 1971) and never really undertook party-centered electoral campaign, suddenly found themselves in the need of dealing with the opposition realignment among the conservatives. Specifically, the rise of the New Frontier Party (NFP) and then Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) as viable oppositions since the mid-1990s indicated the

Table I-1 Vote share in PR in general elections (%)

	LDP's vote share in PR (%)	NFP's vote share in RR (%)	DPJ's vote share in RR (%)
41 st (1996)	32.76	28.04	16.10
42 nd (2000)	28.31	—	25.18
43 rd (2003)	34.6	—	37.39

coming of ‘two-party competition’ under the new electoral system. In the first general election held under the new electoral system in 1996, the vote share of the NFP in the PR only fell short of the LDP by 4.72%. After the NFP disintegrated, the DPJ which rose as the new ‘alternate axis’ to the LDP continued to increase its vote shares in the PR, and in the 2003 general election the DPJ earned higher number of votes in their party vote ([Table I-1]). With the end of Cold War-induced ideological confrontation, these alignments of conservative opposition forces meant that the LDP was no longer the only conservative party, and with higher electoral threshold, it became necessary for the LDP candidates to incorporate not only their *kōenkai* but also other ‘conservative voters’ who now had choices of party, rather than of the ideology.

From Kōmeitō’s perspective, on the other hand, the new electoral rule imposed grave challenge against its survival as a minor party, because the SMD system requires much more number of votes to elect a candidate from a single district. Under the single-member competition, the Kōmeitō’s competitiveness proved incompetent even in the districts where Kōmeitō supporters are most concentrated. For example, in the 2000 Lower House election, an LDP candidate Hirasawa Katsuei and a Kōmeitō candidate Yamaguchi Natsuo found themselves in a fierce competition in District Tokyo 17. Despite the concentrated support demography in Tokyo, Yamaguchi’s vote share fell far short of winning in the district. In fact, of eighteen candidates Kōmeitō fielded in districts in 2000, only seven candidates were elected. These losses implied that the possibility of winning seats in the single-member districts for the Kōmeitō is slim, and the party must rely on the PR tier in sound survival of the party in the Lower House. The establishment of such electoral ‘barter’ between the LDP and the Kōmeitō, however, cannot be fully understood without understanding the two-party relationship cultivated at the local level before the launching of coalition government in the 1990s. In the next chapter, I will touch upon the pre-coalition relationship between the LDP and Kōmeitō in urban local assemblies, which essentially paved the foundation for ‘electoral alliance’ at the national level.

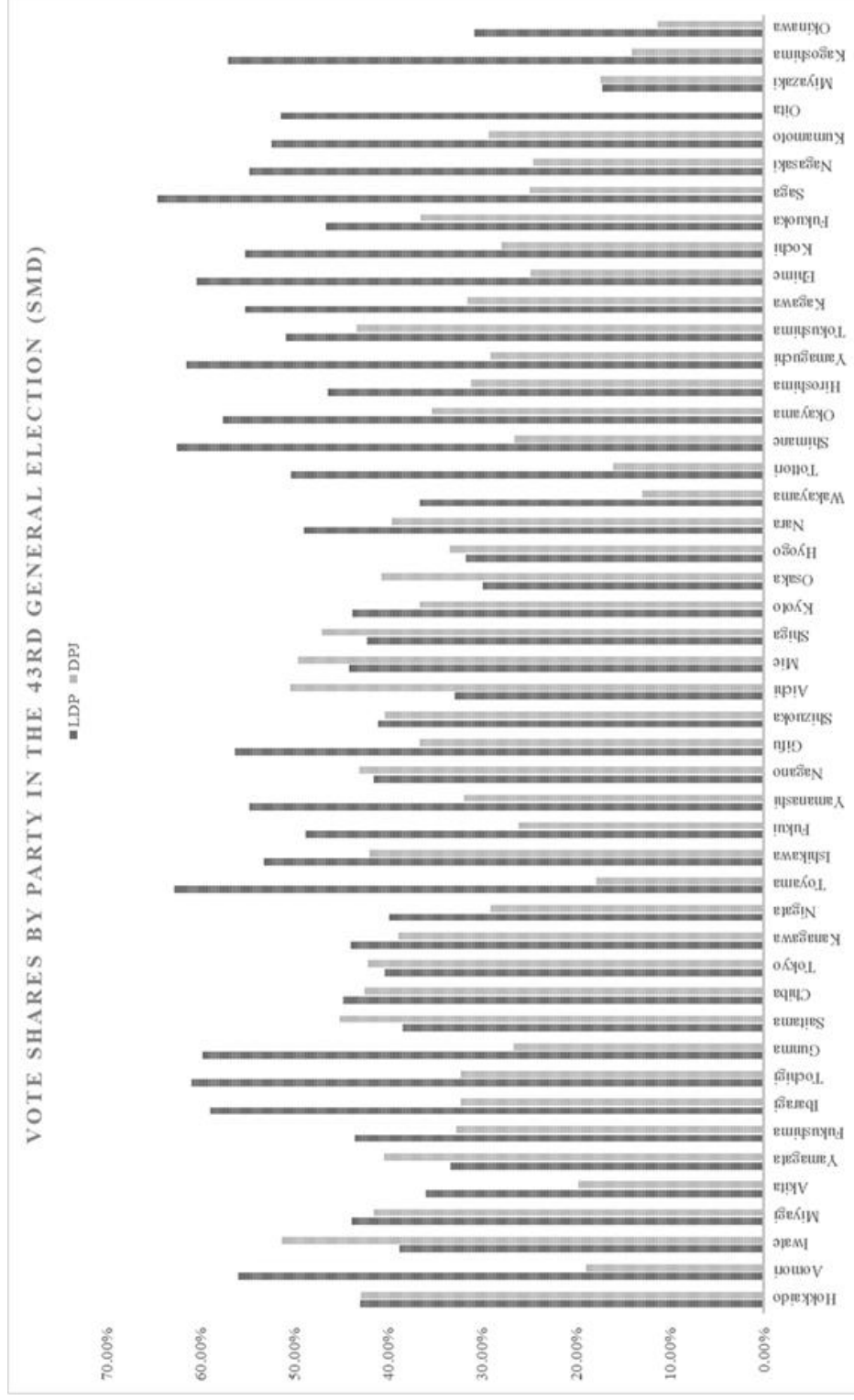


Figure I-1 Vote Shares by Party (LDP and DPJ) in the 2003 General Election (SMD)

Another alteration of the electoral environment induced by the institutional change was the relative increase of the value of urban votes. District reapportionment as a part of electoral reform in 1994 significantly reduced the vote-seat disparity, redressing the rural-biased district malapportionment (McElwain 2012). Under the 55 system, the LDP was essentially a ‘rural party’ established upon clientalist relationship between individual politicians, who poured subsidies and public projects to economically dependent rural areas and interest groups who, in return, gathered under the politicians’ organizational machine (Rosenbluth and Thies 2009: 75-82). This rural-biased political system worked in favor for the LDP throughout the period of economic growth, yet the decline of agricultural industry, population outflow from the rural areas and shrinking *kōenkai* activities demolished the fortification upon which the LDP’s predominance had stood (Sugawara 2009). Simply put, the LDP came to face the necessity of expanding its organizational focus in urban districts, as the electoral reform as well as the demographic changes enhanced the necessity of attracting urban voters. It is possible to grasp the LDP’s relative weakness in urban districts. [Figure I-1] shows the vote shares in the SMD districts by LDP and DPJ in the 2003 general election. While the LDP demonstrates high competitiveness in the rural prefectures, such as Tohoku, Hokuriku, Chūgoku, Shikoku, and Kyūshū regions, in relatively urban regions including Kantō, Chūbu, and Kansai areas, the DPJ showed high competitiveness against the LDP. This reflects not only the LDP’s heavy reliance on rural votes, but also its vulnerability in the urban districts where majority of representatives are elected.²⁸

While such changing electoral environment coupled with LDP’s chronic vulnerability in the urban districts explains why the LDP and the Kōmeitō find it effective to cooperate with one another during general elections, the above explanations fail to account for one of the most critical aspect of inter-party cooperation: the question of policy.²⁹ No party coalition can be formed unless the participating parties are able to

²⁸ Top ten prefectures with largest population in 2003 were: Tokyo, Osaka, Kanagawa, Aichi, Saitama, Chiba, Hokkaido, Hyogo, Fukuoka, and Shizuoka (Statistics Japan).

²⁹ Generally coalition theories are categorized into two models: office-seeking and policy-seeking. From Riker (1962) to Leiserson (1966), the office-seeking models have demonstrated that the number of parties that form coalition government tends to be

come to some sort of an agreement regarding policy goals—even if such policy agreement was made only for the sake of legitimacy. Every coalition government presents policy agreement to the public, in which they list the common goals and future policy directions. Not only such written-out document represents the inter-party agreement among coalition partners, it also functions as the legitimatizing tool for the public, who must digest the fact that multiple parties with differing policy preferences now constitute their government. It is the reason why the LDP and the Japanese Communist Party cannot form a coalition government, even though they may share similar electoral interests. In other words, it is not exaggerating to say that the link between ‘electoral’ and ‘coalition’ alliances among political parties is sealed by the inter-party agreement regarding policies—no matter how superficial it may be.

It is precisely this aspect of inter-party relations where LDP-Kōmeitō government becomes most exposed to its sore spot. The recurring criticism that LDP and Kōmeitō do not share anything aside from electoral interests generated by the new electoral rules is something the two parties have desperately tried to fend off, but not quite successfully. As it will be explored in detail later, the Kōmeitō’s side-switching from the non-LDP camp to the coalition partner of the LDP in the second half of the 1990s was as much jaw-dropping as the LDP’s quick recanting of anti-Sōka Gakkai campaign and proposal for reconciliation, and was enough to invite criticism from opposition parties as well as the public that the two-party government coalition lacked the fundamental ground for political legitimacy.

How distant, then, are the policy positions between the LDP and the Kōmeitō? Some studies have attempted to show the policy distance between the LDP and the Kōmeitō. Kato and Laver (2003)’s work analyzed the correlation between policy positions of political parties and government formation after the 2000 general election, using portfolio allocation model. Their analysis suggests that the sense of economic

‘minimum-winning’ (all parties that joined the coalition are necessary to maintain a simple majority), because of the limited pie for resource distribution. On the other hand, policy-seeking models, most notably Axelrod (1970)’s minimal connected winning coalition and De Swaan (1973)’s closed minimal range coalition, emphasize the importance of policy and ideological compatibility among parties that come to form coalition government.

crises induced the coalition formation between the LDP and Kōmeitō, who shared close policy positions regarding economic policies. While their analysis may explain why LDP approached the Kōmeitō (who was virtually the only potential coalition partner for the LDP), it is limited to the perspective of the dominant player—namely the LDP. As they implied, the stability of the coalition government would be impaired if and when the policy emphasis shifts to other policy axis, for which the two parties do not share the same preferences—such as external policy and the issues of national identity. Simply speaking, the policy overlaps between the two parties did exist, yet it was quite limited. According to UTAS survey conducted in 2010, on the other hand, the Kōmeitō Diet members shared similar policy preferences with DPJ representatives, rather than the LDP, in terms of economic, security, and social policies.³⁰ Particularly in foreign and security policies, the policy distance between the LDP and Kōmeitō becomes most salient. Further, a study by Kabashima and Yamamoto (2004),³¹ which shows policy positions of both Kōmeitō representatives and its supporters, indicate that, while policy positions of Kōmeitō's national representatives have shifted closer to that of LDP's after the formation of coalition government, its supporters remain largely centrist. In the domain of foreign security policy, the Kōmeitō supporters display liberalist approaches to such issues as strengthening of defense capability or preemptive attacks on emergency situations, which are closer to the DPJ than to the LDP. Furthermore, the gaps in policy preferences between Kōmeitō representatives and supporters are also found in social policies. While the Kōmeitō Diet members recognize the necessity for structural reform of economic systems, the supporters prefer redistribution of wealth and sustaining of welfare system. They claim that such gaps in policy preferences between national representatives and the party supporters imply that Kōmeitō is able to segregate ideological preferences and pragmatic policy choices, and such inconsistency is only complemented by the loyalty of the Kōmeitō supporters (146).

According to these studies, then, it would be a stretch to characterize the LDP-

³⁰ 世界 2010年10月号

³¹ 蒲島郁夫=山本耕資.『連立政権における公明党の選択』世界 2004年7月号、143—153頁。

Kōmeitō coalition government as the product of compatible policy preferences. While the lack of prospective coalition partner in the late 1990s may explain why the LDP had no choice but to approach the Kōmeitō, such perspective not only overlooks the Kōmeitō's choice of the LDP over the DPJ, but it also fails to account for the development of party competition after the 2000s. For example, it does not explain why the LDP and Kōmeitō continued on with the partnership after the devastating defeat in the 2007 Upper House election, in which the two parties were unable to secure a simple majority.³² Or, in terms of policy compatibility, the growing drive for rightist agendas by the Second Abe cabinet after 2012, along with the rise of rightist parties such as Japan Restoration Party starting from the 2010s, would have been enough for the Kōmeitō or the LDP to sever the coalition alliance. Similarly, from the Kōmeitō's perspective, it would have made much more sense, both policy- and number-wise, to have sided with the DPJ, particularly after the 2007 Upper House election, if the party's goal was to exercise influence over policies. Particularly, that the Kōmeitō did not choose to form a coalition with the DPJ under the DPJ government (2009-2012)—even though the talks were in the air— indicate that the logic of coalition formation was not found in policy compatibility or in the structure of party competition within the Diet. In other words, neither 'party competition' in the Diet nor the 'policy compatibility' theorem can explain the "sustainability" of the LDP-Kōmeitō coalition partnership over the past two decades.

It is upon this standpoint that this study postulates that it was the electoral alliance, rather than the policy compatibility or structures of party competition in the Diet, that has sustained the LDP-Kōmeitō coalition alliance over the past two decades. More significantly, the conversion from electoral alliance to party alliance was not facilitated through policy agreements, but instead commissioned by the two parties' desire for electoral survival under the new electoral rules, along with the Kōmeitō's capacity to adjust allocation of electoral resources without jeopardizing its organizational integrity. The reason why it was possible for the LDP and Kōmeitō to successfully implement electoral alliance and turn it into sustainable coalition government cannot be explained without shedding light on the Kōmeitō's exceptionally rare ability to prioritize electoral

³² Of 242 seats, LDP and Kōmeitō secured 83 and 20 seats, respectively.

performance over pursuit of policy goals.

3. Argument and Composition of the Research

This study argues that the LDP's sustained dominance after the collapse of the LDP system was engineered by the electoral alliance with the Kōmeitō instituted from 1999, as well as the two parties' successful consolidation of the 'electoral cartel'—a system of electoral dominance particularly in urban regions. Unlike in the past where malapportionment of rural-biased districting rules enabled LDP's electoral dominance throughout the period of economic growth, the introduction of the new electoral rules in 1994 shifted the focus of electoral competition to the urban regions, where LDP's electoral vulnerability became most exposed. The electoral alliance with the Kōmeitō and its tenacious organized votes has functioned to compensate LDP candidates' inability to expand cohesive party support in urban regions, indicating their continuous electoral fragility under the current electoral system.

At the same time, despite conventional views on the LDP-Kōmeitō electoral alliance constituting of preprogrammed exchanges of votes during general elections, the empirical studies suggest that the development of the two-party alliance is inundated with the evidence of unequal distribution of electoral resources. From the system of candidate recommendations to allocation of votes, the LDP and Kōmeitō alike developed such a system that allows individuated incorporation of Kōmeitō votes on the one hand, and the Kōmeitō devised an internal mechanism to avoid over-supporting the LDP counterpart, on the other. Such 'adjustment mechanism' installed at three polity levels—central, prefectural, and district—is embodied within the LDP-Kōmeitō electoral alliance that have developed unequally across districts and regions. Put simply, the two-party relations is characterized by flexible adaptations to both internal and external environments, rather than by the rigid and one-sided centralization process. While such 'flexibility' is precisely the core component of LDP-Kōmeitō electoral alliance and the reason why it has been sustained over the past two decades despite a number of crises, it also connotes precarious nature of the two-party relationship. That the electoral alliance between the LDP and the Kōmeitō operates under flexible adaptations to local, individual

logics suggests that electoral dominance founded upon the two-party alliance is not immune to both fast-changing electoral environments of the urban regions and the inter-coalition relations at the governmental level. Put differently, the LDP-Kōmeitō electoral alliance, upon which LDP's prolonged dominance has been sustained, is a double-edged sword.

In order to illustrate the unique alliance between the LDP and the Kōmeitō that has transformed over the past two decades, the rest of this research is structured as follows.

Chapter II traces the process during which the LDP and Kōmeitō developed to share the same preference for coalition formation amid the political realignment in the 1990s. It illuminates how the introduction of new electoral rules induced perceptual changes among political parties regarding the future consolidation of two-party system, and how such 'assumption' shaped the rationalities of political actors in the early years of political restructuring. In the meantime, it draws upon how the Kōmeitō's experience under the NFP initiative, as well as Kōmeitō-Sōka Gakkai tension during that period, became the foundation for the institutionalization of LDP-Kōmeitō electoral alliance in later years. In discussing the transformation of the LDP preference formation, I will focus particularly on the party's 'great transformation' in the 1990s, which moved from fierce anti-Gakkai campaign to Kōmeitō-courting within a matter of few years. It illustrates how the LDP's power struggles were characterized by both inter-party and intra-factional realignment, and the Kōmeitō-courting by the Obuchi cabinet after the 1998 Upper House election was orchestrated by the hardline conservatives within the LDP.

Chapter III discusses the institutional setting of the LDP-Kōmeitō electoral alliance, and how the 'cooperation' was systematized to incorporate diverse logics of resource distribution and realize flexible adaptations at three polity levels. Specifically, it shows how historical experiences played the key role in devising the Kōmeitō's mechanism of 'risk-minimization' during the execution of election cooperation, which was designed to favor individual-based evaluation and vote mobilization mechanisms over collective methods. Further, it sheds light on the characteristics of Kōmeitō's electoral resources that are concentrated in urban areas, as well as the electoral 'reward' Kōmeitō receives from the LDP that are more salient in rural regions.

The following two chapters analyze how the ‘flexible adaptations’ manifest in the executions of electoral cooperation by looking at temporal and regional variations of LDP-Kōmeitō electoral alliance. First, Chapter IV deals with the temporal variations found in the execution of LDP-Kōmeitō electoral cooperation during general elections in the urban districts. It specifically focuses on the six general elections held between 2000 and 2014, illustrating the adaptability of electoral alliance that accommodates changing electoral environment and rationalities at the district level. The analyses of the past six general elections reveal that the sustainability of the unlikely partnership was engineered not only by the high level of coherence among Kōmeitō supporters, but also through the alliance’s ability to accommodate changing internal and external environments into the operation of electoral cooperation. As the analysis reveals, the ‘challenges’ against the LDP-Kōmeitō alliance continued to transform over time—from the rise of two-party competition, floating voters, to the emergence of new political parties. Yet the coalition alliance has demonstrated its flexibility in overcoming these challenges through the successful institutionalization of adjustment mechanism.

Chapter V discusses the regional variation of LDP-Kōmeitō electoral alliance by looking at the cases of Tokyo and Osaka, particularly in relations to how the rise of local parties affect local LDP-Kōmeitō differently in the two regions. The diverging reactions to the Osaka Restoration Party and its national counterpart Japan Restoration Party in Tokyo and Osaka were embedded not only in the different institutional settings but also in the local power balance among the LDP, Kōmeitō, and ORA/JRP, as well as the accumulated methods of resource allocation that were characterized as ‘mutual dependence’ in Osaka and ‘disengaged coalesce’ in Tokyo.

Lastly, this study concludes with the prospects of the LDP-Kōmeitō alliance in the future, by discussing the transformation of LDP-Kōmeitō ‘electoral cartel’ and its possible limitations. The results of most recent general election held in 2017 reveals critical implications for the future of LDP-Kōmeitō alliance as the Kōmeitō’s “iron support base” seems to be shrinking in number. Given that the Kōmeitō’s unfailing support base was the cornerstone of the successful two-party coalition government over the past two decades, such changes may signal the possible alterations for the future of

LDP dominance.

This study is an attempt to explore how LDP managed to maintain its electoral dominance after the end of LDP-friendly, rural-biased electoral competition by constructing sustainable mechanism of electoral alliance with the Kōmeitō since 1999. The major implications of this study are as follows. First, while prevalent opposition failure seems to be the chronic reason for LDP's sustained dominance, the electoral alliance with the Kōmeitō was the critical apparatus through which the LDP was able to overcome new urban challenges under the new electoral rules. Second, this study elucidates upon the changing nature of vote cultivation among LDP candidates, whose traditional local networks continue to shrink in number. In other words, the incorporation of Kōmeitō's organized votes into LDP candidates' individual personal kōenkai provided resilience against LDP's old problems—namely the lack of strong party support in the urban districts. Even though the significance of personal vote cultivation itself does not necessarily dismiss the importance of unorganized votes, it still holds implications on the behaviors of political actors in their districts.

Lastly, the case of LDP-Kōmeitō coalition founded upon 'electoral alliance' suggests that the successful electoral alliance can lead to sustainable inter-party coalition, even when the participating parties do not share similar policy preferences. While existing studies on coalition government tend to focus only on number-games in the parliament or policy compatibility in explaining the durability (or lack thereof) of coalition government, the case of LDP-Kōmeitō government provides insight to how successful electoral arrangement can produce sustainable coalition government at the national level.

The Japanese politics of the past two decades developed along with the transformation of LDP-Kōmeitō relations, which brought the LDP a high degree of resilience against recurring challenges in the post-reform era. During this time, Kōmeitō transformed from LDP's 'strange bedfellow' to what can be described as its 'external faction.'³³ What held the two parties together was not the commonly-held policy goals,

³³ Yakushiji (2016) argues that the Kōmeitō defines itself as LDP's factional party, an addition to the LDP's pseudo-coalition alliance within which various factions have competed

but rather the shared ambition for electoral success. The central apparatus that operated under the coalition government was the ‘electoral cartel,’ a system that sustained LDP-Kōmeitō domination over party competition.

over policy and ideological stance ever since its establishment (231-233).

II. FROM CONFRONTATION TO ELECTORAL ALLIANCE: THE 1990S POLITICAL REALIGNMENT AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF LDP-KŌMEITŌ RELATIONS

The purpose of this chapter is to answer two questions. First, it asks why and how the LDP and Kōmeitō developed to share the same preference to form party coalition in the midst of political realignment in the 1990s. Specifically, it tries to illuminate why LDP suddenly shifted its gear from anti-Sōka Gakkai campaign in the mid-1990s to courtship dance toward the Kōmeitō in the late 1990s, and why Kōmeitō switched sides from the non-LDP initiative to forming cooperation partnership with the LDP. Second, it questions why the historic reconciliation between the two parties took place in July 1999, instead of 1994 or 1996.

In drawing the process of coalition formation, it sheds light on how the two parties' strategic approaches toward the new electoral rules became one of the critical apparatus for coalition bargaining. First, this chapter discusses the Kōmeitō's internal division regarding the dissolution of the party to join the NFP initiative in the mid-1990s, in order to elucidate how the vertical division between national party leadership and local organizations was characterized by electoral concerns on both sides. It pays particular attention to the organization's internal division over the issue of Kōmeitō's dissolution and merger with the NFP, and discuss why Sōka Gakkai displayed hesitation toward the Kōmeitō's plan to join the non-LDP initiative, which essentially paved the ground for future electoral alliance between the LDP and Kōmeitō. Second, this chapter traces the development of LDP-Kōmeitō relations in the 1990s from the LDP's perspective, which transformed from confrontation in the mid-1990s to incorporation in the late 1990s. In particular, it sheds light on the LDP's internal transformation from anti-Gakkai campaign to the Obuchi cabinet's Kōmeitō-courting from the perspectives of both inter-party and intra-party factional realignments throughout the 1990s. Lastly, this chapter concludes by illuminating upon the characteristics of urban political alignment since the period of high economic growth, which became the foundation of LDP-Kōmeitō electoral alliance at the national level after 1999.

1. The NFP initiative and Kōmeitō's internal division

1) The Rise of New Frontier Party (NFP) and the Search for 'New Axis'

The immediate trigger that ignited the LDP-Kōmeitō antagonism in the 1990s was the formation of the New Frontier Party led by Ozawa Ichiro, and its electoral success in the 1995 Upper House election. The LDP's perception vis-à-vis the Kōmeitō and Sōka Gakkai exacerbated when the post-election assessment on the NFP's successful campaign highlighted the criticality of Kōmeitō's highly organized votes. The Kōmeitō's organization coherence essentially allowed the new party's significant advancement possible, succeeding to establish another conservative 'axis' to replace the LDP after the fall of the two non-LDP alliance cabinets under Hosokawa and Hata leaderships.

In June 1994, following the breakup of eight-party non-LDP coalition government two months earlier, the LDP formed a three-party alliance with Japan Socialist Party (JSP) and New Party Sakigake, returning to ruling power one year after the end of its uninterrupted thirty-eight-year rule. Shocked by the socialists' side-switching, this abrupt 'reconciliation' between the two archenemies of the Cold War era helped build a momentum for the remaining non-LDP opponents—from Japan Renewal Party, Japan New Party, Democratic Socialist Party, to the Kōmeitō—to turn themselves into a single unified party. On August 5, five party leaders from the non-LDP oppositions began discussing the possibility of creating a new political party—which they provisionally named New-New Party (*shin-shin tou*)—that stood upon three basic principles: establishing strong parliamentary democracy, overcoming one-party pacifism and taking on international cooperative initiatives, and promotion of reforms including market deregulation.³⁴ On September 28, nine opposition parties gathered under the unified parliamentary group (*kaiha*) Kaikaku, consisting of 187 Lower House and 39 Upper House representatives.³⁵ On the same day, Ozawa Ichiro, then the leader of Japan Renewal Party (*nihon shinsei tou*), was named the head of the new party preparation committee, which led to the birth of New Frontier Party (NFP, *shinshintō*) on December

³⁴ 公明新聞1994.8. 6付 1頁

³⁵ Breakdown of the Kaikaku: Japan Renewal Party 62, Kōmeitō 52, Japan New Party 29, Democratic Socialist Party 19, Liberal Party 7, Koshikai 6, Mirai 5, Reform 5, Liberals 2,

10, 1994.

The formation of NFP can be understood from two interrelated perspectives. First, it can be characterized as a reactionary realignment against the LDP-JSP-Sakigake alliance in the anticipation of the coming of two-party system. After the JSP left the non-LDP coalition alliance in protest against Ozawa's strategy to squeeze the socialists out of the important cabinet posts, helpless LDP made a swift approach to New Party Sakigake and the socialists, forming three-party coalition government on June 30, 1994 (Curtis 1999, 188-190). Not surprisingly, the opposition parties who worked with the socialists in overthrowing the LDP rule in 1993 severely criticized the launching of the Murayama Cabinet, claiming that the government represented nothing but the interests of the establishment:

This cabinet is nothing but a number-crunching cabinet without policy agreement. Two parties that have completely opposite interests in our nation's basic policies such as foreign security and nuclear power plants decided to shake each other's hand overnight because the LDP just swallowed the policy suggestions of the JSP and Sakigake. From anyone's view, this is a coalition without policy agreement. In other words, it is very unclear where this cabinet is heading. They talk about the stability of the government and manage to gather enough number of Diet members, but it does not sound like that the policy speech by the prime minister we just heard actually comes from his heart. In truth we cannot find any ideology or policy goals.³⁶

In other words, the establishment of the LDP-JSP alliance was perceived as the ultimate demonstration of LDP's desperation to return to ruling power, a goal they were willing to achieve at any cost after spending a year as 'opposition' party for the first time since its birth. At the same time, while the parties that joined the formation of the NFP, including the Kōmeitō, repeatedly claimed that it was becoming increasingly necessary to establish a new 'axis' to oppose the LDP-JSP alliance, the ultimate glue that held the opposition parties together was the *idea* of 'political reform.'

Second, the reason why the fragmented minor parties, including the Kōmeitō, decided to form a unified party in the second half of 1994, instead of remaining

³⁶ 衆議院本会議第2号1994年7月20日(発言者・公明党 石田幸四郎委員長)
http://kokkai.ndl.go.jp/cgi-bin/KENSAKU/swk_dispdoc.cgi?SESSION=16018&SAVED_RID=2&PAGE=0&POS=0&TOTAL=0&SRV_ID=7&DOC_ID=6808&DPAGE=1&DTOTAL=13&DPOS=13&SORT_DIR=1&SORT_TYPE=0&MODE=1&DMY=16529

independent political entities as they did when they formed an eight-party coalition government in 1993, was the anticipation of the next general election. The set of four political reform bills was reached a final agreement in March 1994, while the districting procedure was underway under the newly established district apportionment committee. It was becoming increasingly evident that the next general election was going to be—and must be—held under the new electoral rule, as a ‘grand finale’ of the ‘successful’ political reform efforts throughout the early 1990s. Ichikawa Yūichi, then the secretary-general of the Kōmeitō and one of the strongest advocates of the formation of new party, repeatedly emphasized the ‘coming of new age,’ implying that the Kōmeitō would not survive the institutional changes on its own:

In the upcoming extraordinary session, we will pass the districting legislation, which will mark the completion of institutional reform. And this means that the next general election will be held under the new electoral rule. When this happens, we are going to compete in 300 districts, each of which can there only be one winner. And whether we win or lose in the 300 SMDs will determine how many votes we can win in PR.³⁷

In other words, the Kōmeitō’s concern was rooted in the anticipation of the coming of single-member competitions, and how to survive the new electoral system which was designed, more or less, to eliminate minor parties. To be sure, the prospects of electing Kōmeitō candidates in the SMDs were extremely bleak. At the same time, the NFP initiative can be interpreted as the embodiment of unclouded confidence among the non-LDP opposition groups that the electoral system reform would bring about the establishment of two-party system, and that opposition camp must be united in order to challenge the LDP dominance.

2) **Sōka Gakkai’s Response and the 1994 Two-Step Merger Plan**

While most of the Kōmeitō representatives in the Diet, following Ichikawa’s initiative, were eager to join the new party, the same enthusiasm could not be found among neither the local politicians nor the power base, Sōka Gakkai. Rather, their response to the idea of Kōmeitō’s dissolution and the merger with the new party was riddled with confusion and anxiety. One of critical factors was the upcoming nationwide

³⁷ 公明新聞1994.09. 07 3頁 神奈川県本部議員総会での市川書記長あいさつ

local election, which was to be held in April 1995. The local Kōmeitō branches were already undergoing the endorsement process by the time the talks for new party formation surfaced, and they claimed that the merging with the new party altogether would invite extreme complexity in the election campaign and strategies. Instead, they proposed that the merging of the local Kōmeitō organizations in the new party initiative should at least be put off until after the general local election.

In the beginning, the Kōmeitō leadership was confident that the Kōmeitō's complete merger to the new party initiative was possible in a short time period, once the concrete plan was set up to convince the supporters. Ichikawa even seemed assured that the merger must be completed before the 1995 UH election in July at the latest, so that the entire existing Kōmeitō organization could work together to overturn the LDP-JSP majority in the UH and destroy the "last stronghold of the 1955 system."³⁸ The reasoning was that, especially for the Lower House representatives, the sooner the new party was formed the better, given that the Murayama cabinet could decide to dissolve the Lower House at any time and call for an election. Yet the reluctance of the local organizations as well as Sōka Gakkai was more profound than Ichikawa and the party leadership expected (Yakushiji 2016: 136-141). As a compromise, they agreed that the merging of the local Kōmeitō assembly members as well as their local support organizations would be put off until after April. Yet, since it was inevitable that the official launching of new party was going to happen before the end of the year, there surfaced 'two-step merger plan' within the Kōmeitō. Specifically, they proposed that, before joining the new party before the end of the year, the current Kōmeitō will be dissolved into two groups, dividing national and local assembly members. The LH and UH representatives will join the new party immediately in order to prepare for general or UH election, while the local organization would follow through after the nationwide local election. At Kōmeitō's Central Party Committee held on August 30, 1994, Ichikawa emphasized that the dissolution of the Kōmeitō is only a temporary measure, and the Kōmeitō would soon be reunited again under the new banner:

³⁸ 公明新聞1994.8. 9 1頁

It is our hope that, in time, our local assembly members to join the new-new party as well. Not only from the Kōmeitō, but all local legislators from each party joining this initiative will participate in this effort. That is the goal we are headed. ... I heard some are worried that a political party with only local assembly members will have little political power. But I hope that you understand that this [dissolution of Kōmeitō] is only a temporal measure, to which local members are going to join in the near future.³⁹

In addition, the Kōmeitō leadership repeatedly emphasized that they are going to compete in the upcoming UH election in July, as well as the next general election—whenever it may be—as members of the new party. On September 21, Kōmeitō’s Extended Central Executive Council adopted a motion for dissolving the party; all local assembly members, along with eleven UH members, about 600 party staff members, and party’s official publication branch would remain as the Kōmeitō, while most national assembly members were separated and to join the new party. The motion was made official at the 33rd National Party Convention held on November 5, the same occasion that celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of the founding of the Kōmeitō.

What is significant is that, within a matter of three weeks, the Kōmeitō leadership changed their attitudes about the issue of *when* the remaining Kōmeitō members—local assembly members and party staffs—should join the new party. While at the end of August Ichikawa was hopeful to complete the full merger of the Kōmeitō before the UH election in July 1995, at the Extended Central Executive Council held three weeks later, Kōmeitō’s Chairman Ishida Kōshiro makes a statement that the timing of the second merger will be decided after giving full consideration to all relevant factors, and it will be “sometime between after the next local election and before the 1999 UH election.”⁴⁰ It seems that, behind this sudden change of plan, lay the adamant resistance among the local assembly members as well as Sōka Gakkai. On the 5th Regular Advisory Meeting held on September 22, the executive members of Sōka Gakkai made an explicit request to the party leaders to provide “as detailed and complaisant explanation as possible” as to “why it is necessary for the Kōmeitō to be dissolved and join the new party,” and by doing so to assuage “the sentiments of the Gakkai members and supporters who have

³⁹ 公明新聞1994. 9. 4 1頁

⁴⁰ 公明新聞1994.9. 22 1頁

wholeheartedly devoted themselves to supporting the Kōmeitō.”⁴¹ Despite growing demands by other co-founding parties for prompt incorporation of the entire Kōmeitō organization to the new party, the Kōmeitō leadership began providing evasive answers. At the 77th Central Committee held on October 1, Party Chairman Ishida answered that the question of the timing of merger should be “left up to each of the two parties that will be organized with the dissolution of the Kōmeitō.”⁴²

Many have pointed out that the Kōmeitō’s refusal to incorporate the entire organization to the new party was the primary reason why the ‘*ichi-ichi line*,’ or the close relationship between Ichikawa and Ozawa Ichiro that held the new party framework together, aggravated, leading ultimately to the failure of NFP framework (Goto 2014: 306, Nakano 2016; 10-12, Yakushiji 2016:138-141). The question, then, is why the local Kōmeitō organizations as well as Sōka Gakkai put brakes on the new party initiative. From a short-term perspective, the initial hesitance seemed to have derived from the possible consequences such dramatic structural changes could bring upon the upcoming nationwide general local election. Yet in the end, the Kōmeitō never entirely merged with the NFP. In fact, from an early stage, even before the official establishment of the NFP, Sōka Gakkai declared that it would keep certain distance from the new party. On November 10, five days after the Kōmeitō adopted the dissolution motion at the National Party Convention, Sōka Gakkai announced *Basic View on Prospective Relationship with Politics (kongono seijini kansuru kihonteki kenkai)*, in which they claimed that, while their one-party support for the Kōmeitō (after the dissolution of the party) would remain unchanged, same merit would not apply to the new party:

As the 55 system has come to an end, today’s political situation in Japan is undergoing significant changes, calling for reforms in various dimensions. Kōmeitō’s participation in the New-New Party can be credited as a constructive decision in response to this time of great change. Standing on such historic turning point, we, Sōka Gakkai, wish to clarify our basic principles in dealing with politics hereafter. From now onward, the criteria for candidate support will be evaluated on individual basis, after giving consideration to each candidate’s political attitude, policy preferences, personal qualities and views, accomplishment, and his/her understanding of Gakkai ideology.

⁴¹ 公明新聞1994. 9. 23 1頁

⁴² 公明新聞1994.10. 2 1頁

Gakkai will carry out evaluation process before each election. The specific decision will be made based on careful evaluations by Central Committee (*chūōkaigi*) or each Society Council (*shakai kyōgikai*) within central, regional, or prefectural headquarters set up by the Central Committee.⁴³

Simply put, Sōka Gakkai recanted their original position of ‘one-party support’ (*ittō shiji*), and declared to take on individual-based nomination system once the new party was launched. By introducing an evaluation system centering on *shakai kyōgikai*, or Society Council, on every polity level, Sōka Gakkai essentially put forth that their support for each candidate will be decided based on the candidate’s quality, rather than his/her party affiliation. In a sense, this decision ran counter to what the reformists strove to accomplish by implementing the new electoral rule, which was to induce party-based competition between two major parties. And even after the NFP was long gone, this introduction of individual-based evaluation system was to bear great consequences to the nature of LDP-Kōmeitō electoral cooperation.

Renouncing of one-party support was not necessarily the expression of Sōka Gakkai’s discontent with the idea of Kōmeitō disintegrating; rather, it was motivated by two pragmatic constraints. First, the merger of Kōmeitō into the new party, and the fact that the next general election was going to be competed under that single banner, meant that the Sōka Gakkai was no longer supporting just fifty candidates—as they did for the Kōmeitō under the mid-sized multimember district system—and the number could go up to 300. As the leaders of the new party were determined to establish the ‘opposition axis’ that could provide alternative policy regime to the LDP-JSP-Sakigake alliance, it was likely that the new party was going to endorse as many candidates as it could in the 300 SMDs. While Sōka Gakkai’s organizational precision in allocating both candidates and votes had already been substantiated, such electoral strategy was efficient because the number of candidates was limited—supporting 300 candidates could jeopardize their electoral integrity. Second, the emphasis on the personal quality of each candidate, rather than his/her party affiliation, was meant to function as a deterrence apparatus against non-Kōmeitō candidates in local election. Since the local electoral system continued to adopt multi-member district system, it was likely that the candidates, endorsed by the

⁴³ 公明新聞1994.11.11付 2頁

local branches of the new party, would come to have conflicting interests over the distribution of Sōka Gakkai votes. In other words, the declaration of candidate-based evaluation policy was put forth in order to reconfirm the priorities of (former) Kōmeitō candidates over other candidates, after the merger was completed.

In fact, this policy was first put forth for the upcoming 1995 local election. At the 77th Central Party Committee held on October 1, 1994, then the Kōmeitō's chairman of election committee Ota Akihiro explained the new principles in electoral cooperation on local level:

At this point, the Kōmeitō will not be obligated to engage in electoral cooperation just because some candidates are running as endorsed candidates from new-new party [in the next local election]. Until now, we have engaged in electoral cooperation with other parties based on three basic principles: (1) It should be carried out based on agreements made on local levels, not on the central level; (2) It should exhibit some level of give-and-take balance; (3) All agreements on electoral cooperation must be endorsed by the party's central executive committee.

He continues that, in dealing with new electoral environment, the Kōmeitō's election committee would enforce two additional principles: (4) The candidate has profound understanding of the Kōmeitō's policies; and (5) the person is deemed worthy of our support in terms of his/her personality and insights.⁴⁴

It might have been the defensiveness of Sōka Gakkai organization that put brakes on the full merge of Kōmeitō to the new party initiative, yet it is premature to simply assign its desire for independence to the Kōmeitō/Sōka Gakkai's identity problem. Rather, the internal debate within the party and its support organization regarding their future direction during the period of "great transformation" revealed that it was the electoral consequences and maintaining of organizational solidarity, rather than the concerns for policy or ideological compatibility, that dominated the internal discussion. In an attempt to persuade its supporters, the Kōmeitō leadership repeated the importance of establishing 'opposition axis' to the LDP (and its collaborators), without fully developing the policy consequences of it. And more importantly, the Kōmeitō supporters and Sōka Gakkai never really asked what should be a critical question for the party identity. For the Kōmeitō, holding hands with Ozawa, who advocated 'normal country' agenda and

⁴⁴ 公明新聞1994.10. 3 3頁

market deregulation, connoted great policy consequences which should have triggered fierce internal policy debate. Yet what prevailed the internal discussion was the concerns for upcoming local election and the prospective Upper House election, and whether or not merging together with the Ozawa group was in Kōmeitō and Sōka Gakkai's best interests in terms of electoral prospects.

2. Toward LDP-Kōmeitō Alliance: LDP's Internal Division

While the Kōmeitō's internal strife was characterized by the vertical cleavage between central leadership and local activists, the LDP's internal division in the mid-1990s was buried under factional struggles. The development of intra-party struggles within the LDP 1990s is complicated by the fact that the party's internal strife during this period evolved around both intra-factional and inter-party realignments triggered by a series of electoral crises. Without a doubt, the LDP during the 1990s was deeply divided over the issues of party management and whom to cooperate with—be it *jisahsa* or *hoho* advocates, or pro- or anti-Ozawa groups within the LDP. If there was one thing that held the party together, it was its desperation to remain in the ruling power. This section traces the development of LDP's internal battles over the means of survival, and how the search for stability led to the triumph of those who supported the initiation of pro-Kōmeitō system in 1999.

Perhaps the most symbolic of the depth of internal disarray within the LDP during this period can be seen in its contrasting reactions to the results of two Upper House elections held in 1995 and 1998. In both elections, LDP underwent one of the worst defeats, securing far less than a simple majority ([Figure II-1] and [Figure II-2]). Yet the reactions to these results were quite contrasting: after the 1995 UH election, the LDP accelerated the 'anti-Gakkai campaign,' while three years later the party leadership launches a full-fledged campaign for luring Kōmeitō into their side. Needless to say, there were notable differences in the political preconditions of the two occasions. First, the New Frontier Party, who rose as the LDP's opposition axis in the 1995 Upper House election, had been dissolved at the end of year 1997, breeding splinter parties including

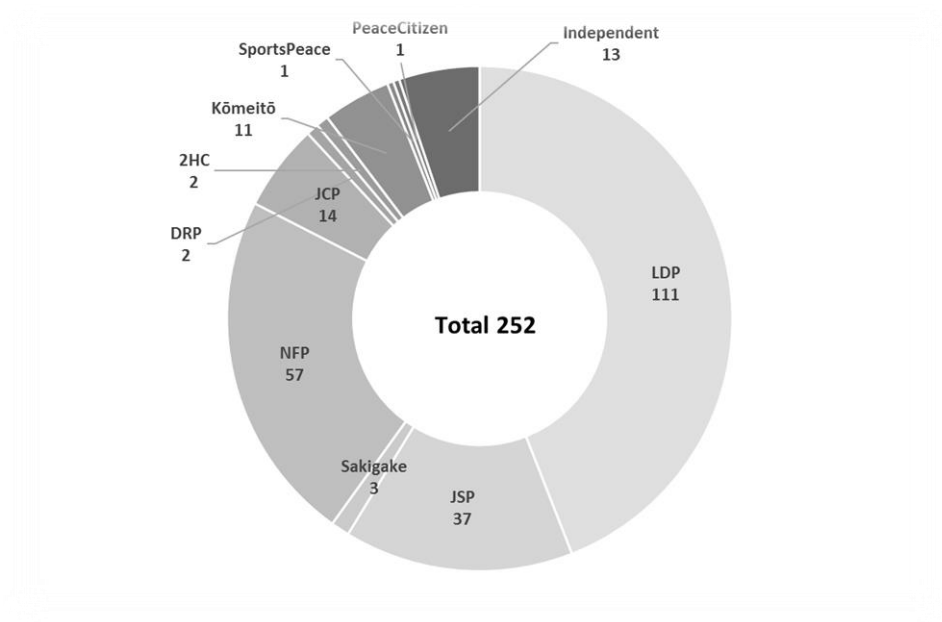


Figure II-1 Result of 1995 Upper House Election

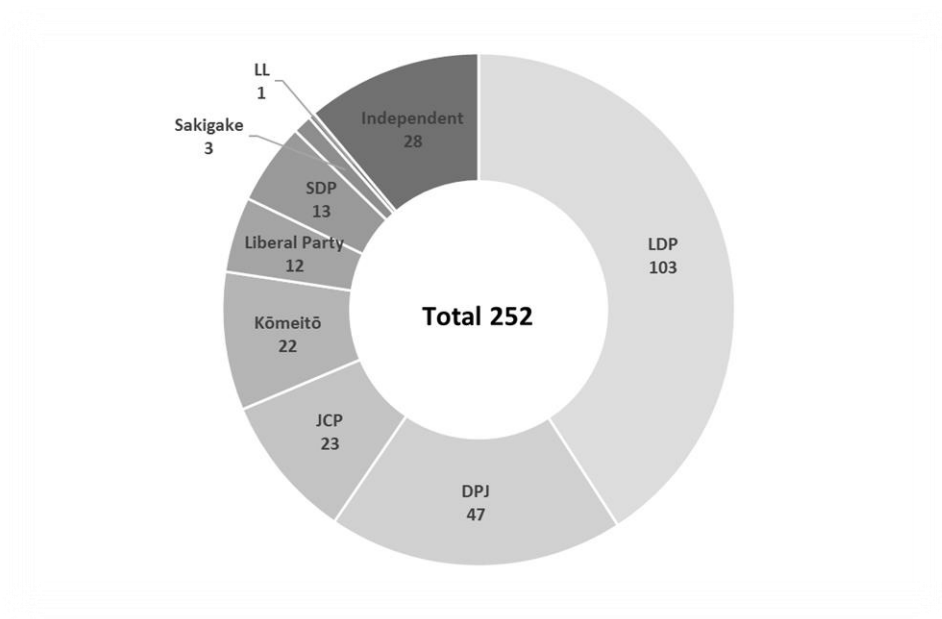


Figure II-2 Result of 1998 Upper House Election

those who joined Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), “New Kōmeitō,” and Ozawa’s Liberal Party. Second, the party strength of JSP, or its splinter party SDP, had been significantly reduced in the 1998 Upper House election, which essentially diminished the benefit of maintaining the coalition partnership with the LDP. And third, the LDP had regained a simple majority in the Lower House in 1997, which brought new axis to the LDP’s internal struggles for power.

Ultimately, the LDP’s change of hearts toward the idea of cooperation with the Kōmeitō was induced by both inter-party and intra-factional realignments that accelerated after the national elections. Specifically, the shrinking party strengths of the JSP/SDP and the Sakigake, along with the LDP’s inability to secure a simple majority in the Upper House, led to the change of preference over coalition partners. Second, the result of the 1998 Upper House election which mutilated *Jishasa* logic within the LDP led to the ultimate fall of liberal conservatives within the LDP, and gave way to the rise of hardline conservatives, or *Hoho* advocates, paving the way for coalition with Ozawa Ichiro and, ultimately, with the Kōmeitō. Prime Minister Obuchi’s courtship dance toward the Kōmeitō since the second half of 1998 was emblazoned with the LDP’s attempt to lure Kōmeitō through the maneuvering of electoral tools.

1) **From Anti-Gakkai Campaign to Inter-Party Realignment**

The establishment of LDP-JSP vs. NFP framework became the first turning point for the LDP-Kōmeitō relationship in the 1990s. The LDP began perceiving the NFP—particularly the old Kōmeitō/Sōka Gakkai—as a direct ‘threat’ against its dominance after the advancement of the NFP in the 1995 Upper House election. In this election, the LDP won forty-six seats against NFP’s forty, while the JSP underwent devastating loss and lost almost half the seats in the Upper House.⁴⁵ What shocked the LDP leadership, more than anything else, was the fact that the NFP’s vote shares in both PR and districts were higher than those of the LDP.⁴⁶ While the LDP-JSP alliance manage to hold a simple majority in the Upper House, it was becoming increasingly obvious that the LDP

⁴⁵ After the election, the JSP’s total number of seats in the Upper House declined from 71 to 37.

⁴⁶ Vote share in PR: LDP 27.29%, NFP 30.75%; in districts: LDP 25.4%, NFP 26.47%

must come up with a sound strategy in battling the NFP before the next general election—otherwise it might once again hand over the position of a ruling party.

Even before the formation of the NFP, the anti-Gakkai activity was developed by *Shigatsukai* (April Society), and its inter-House study group Society for Article 20 of Constitution (*Kenpōnijūjōwokangaerukai*) led by LDP's Kamei Shizuka and Shirakawa Katsuhiko. Established in February 1994, the objective of this LDP group was clearly set on de-legitimizing the Kōmeitō and its support base Sōka Gakkai, who appeared to be moving together with Ozawa Ichiro in creating the new 'opposition axis.' In a letter to address the establishment of Society for Article 20, the society's president Kamei points to the movement of Sōka Gakkai and its desire to become a ruling party as a 'threat' to the values of postwar Japanese society:

With the birth of coalition government, our 'free society,' for which a great many people who lived before us have put tremendous efforts in building in the aftermath of the war in order to protect the 'freedom of heart' is at the brink of complete destruction.

It is because an extremely exclusivist one religious organization is plotting to incorporate its own political party into the ruling coalition, monopolize the politics, and become the de facto ruler of our country. Particularly, the recent introduction of combined electoral system as a part of political reform has brought their ambition closer to becoming a reality.⁴⁷

Interestingly enough, Kamei's sense of crisis seems to have been triggered by the introduction of the new electoral system, which he believed could lead to the advancement of Kōmeitō-Sōka Gakkai as well as the consolidation of 'alternative axis' that could replace the LDP. And Kamei was by no means the only one within the LDP who felt the need to address the issue. In the declaration, a total of fifty-one LDP representatives was listed as the board members, which included several names who later became the advocates of the LDP-Kōmeitō framework—including Nonaka Hiromu himself.⁴⁸

Facing the possibility of the consolidation of the two-party system and another 'regime change' after the 1995 Upper House election, the LDP's anti-Gakkai campaign only exacerbated. Instead of seeking internal reform, the first move the LDP made after

⁴⁷ 白川2000:207

⁴⁸ Complete list of names can be found in Shiarakawa (2000)'s book (pp.205-206)

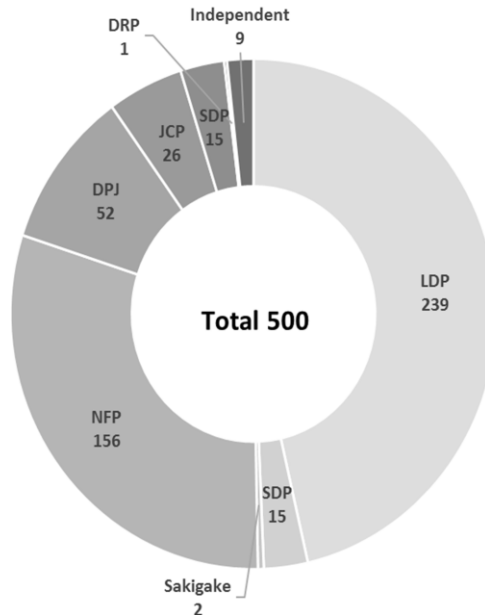


Figure II-3 Result of 1996 Lower House Election

the 1995 UH election was to attack the major adversary that helped the advancement of the NFP—the (former) Kōmeitō and its support base, Sōka Gakkai. Comparing Sōka Gakkai to Aum Shinrikyo was only a beginning. In the process of reforming Religious Corporation Act (*shūkyōhōjin hou*) after the subway sarin terror attack initiated by Aum Shinrikyo, the LDP “threatened” to summon the president emeritus of Sōka Gakkai Ikeda Daisaku to the witness stand in the Diet, while then Minister of Construction Kamei made a remark of so-called ‘revenge budget,’ in which he claimed to reduce the budget for the districts that showed strong support for the NFP in elections (Shimada 2007:152-154). LDP’s weekly party newspaper *Jiyū Shinpō* ran a column entitled *NFP=Sōka Gakkai Watching* between January 1996 to October 1997, in which the LDP ceaselessly

criticized not only Ozawa Ichiro and his manipulation of party management, but also the Sōka Gakkai and its leader Ikeda. The former Kōmeitō as well as the NFP immediately fought back, claiming that the LDP's related attacks on the NFP and Sōka Gakkai was based on unfounded prejudice against a law-abiding religious organization, and the LDP's resentment was nothing but misdirected anger towards the electoral loss.⁴⁹

The fundamental purpose of the LDP's fierce Sōka Gakkai bashing that took place between 1994 and 1997 was not necessarily the destruction of the religious organization, or the Kōmeitō, for that matter, but rather the destruction of the NFP (Yakushiji 2016: 149-165). LDP's denunciation tactics against the former Kōmeitō and Sōka Gakkai were, without a doubt, effective in exacerbating the public image against the religious organization which was not great to begin with. At the same time, the relentless attacks on Sōka Gakkai played a critical role in driving the wedge between the (former) Kōmeitō supporters and the non-Kōmeitō NFP leadership. From the LDP's perspective, the result of the 1995 Upper House election made clear that the NFP was a threat only because of the highly organized votes from the Kōmeitō supports. At this point, the only thing the LDP could do was to elevate public criticism against the 'undemocratic' religious organization and its collusion with the political party, and hope that it would cause enough damage to their relationship. In fact, the LDP's attacks on Sōka Gakkai suddenly came to an end as soon as the former Kōmeitō cut the ties with the NFP and the party dissolved.

The LDP's strategy to attack Sōka Gakkai and induce internal division within the NFP was at least effective, when we look at the result of the 1996 general election held on October 20. While the LDP failed to win a simple majority in this election, it was the NFP who 'lost' in this election ([Figure II-3]). Despite the fact that the NFP fielded 235 candidates in SMDs, only 96 was elected. The vote shares in SMD and PR was 27.97% and 28.04%, respectively, which were less than those of LDP's.⁵⁰ Some argue that the NFP's poor performance in the 1996 general election was caused by lack of Sōka Gakkai's support, who were intimidated by the series of attacks from the LDP and also

⁴⁹ 公明新聞 1995年8月7日 1-2頁 「異常な自民党の学会攻撃<上>」 等参照。

⁵⁰ LDP's vote shares in 1996 general election: SMD 38.63%, PR 32.76%

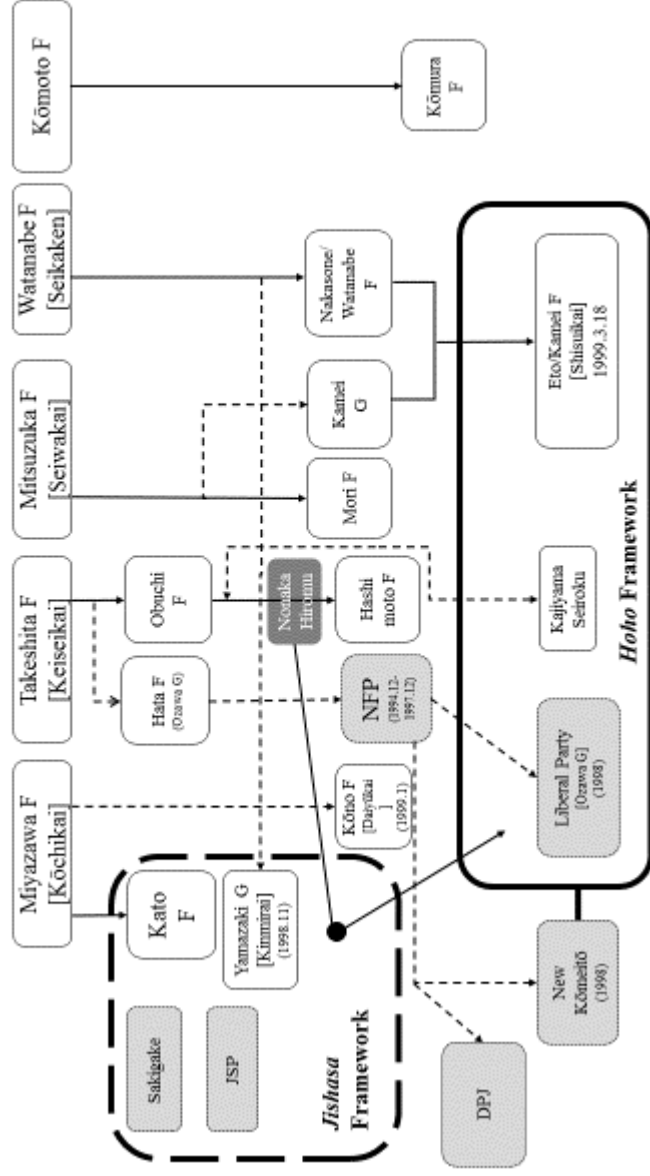
did not wish to wreck the accumulated relationship with the local LDP organizations.⁵¹ At the same time, the result of the general election also gave the LDP a reason to lay off of extreme Sōka Gakkai-bashing—namely the devastation of its coalition partners, the SDP and Sakigake, who earned fifteen and two seats, respectively. Soon the SDP resolved the coalition partnership with the LDP, putting an end to the short-lived LDP-socialist framework. At the same time, the 1996 general election triggered the internal power struggle within the LDP which centered around the liberals and hardline conservatives.

2) **LDP's Inter-Factional Realignment**

While the series of anti-Gakkai campaign developed in the mid-1990s was by no means peripheral in its scale, it is also inaccurate to conclude that it reflected the undivided opinion of the LDP. If Kōmeitō's internal division in the 1990s was characterized by vertical conflict between national and local party organizations, the LDP's internal restructuring developed horizontally—in the form of intra-/inter-factional realignment. One of the puzzling things about the launching of LDP-Kōmeitō coalition government in 1999 was the fact that the LDP's attitude seemed to undergo complete shift from confrontation to reconciliation in a blink of an eye. While such sudden 'shift' of LDP's attitude toward the Kōmeitō is the reason why the 'moral legitimacy' of the government was often questioned by the opposition forces, the route to coalition formation must be placed within the narrative of 'factional struggles' as well as the power shift between liberal and hardline conservatives within the LDP.

The internal division within the LDP in the 1990s is often characterized as *hohojishasa* conflict, which can be perceived as the byproduct of intra-factional rivalries within major factions. In the 1990s, four of five major factions within the LDP underwent significant restructuring, caused mostly by power struggle for leadership. What first triggered the factional realignment within the LDP was the split of Takeshita Faction, so-called *Keiseikai*. Hata Faction's defection from *Keiseikai* and the formation

⁵¹ For example, Shimada (2009) argues that the local Sōka Gakkai organizations refrained from openly supporting the NFP candidates in SMDs, taking on 'autonomous voting' policy (94).



⁵² Redrawn by the author based on Kusano (2008: 101), Park (2011: 270-297), etc.

of Japan Renewal Party, initiated by Ozawa Ichiro, was the primary reason why LDP became an opposition party in 1993. After Obuchi Keizō assumed the leadership position, he cooperated with Kato Kōichi, who also won the leadership race within the Miyazawa Faction (*Kōchikai*), in the pursuit of *Jishasa* Framework under the prime ministership of Hashimoto Ryūtarō. On the other hand, Kōno Yōhei left Miyazawa Faction with fifteen members (including Asō Tarō) after he lost to Katō Kōichi and formed *Daiyūkai* in January 1999. *Seikaken* led by Watanabe Michio also met with defection of Yamazaki Group, who later formed a new faction *Kinmirai* in November 1998, and became a close ally of Katō. What was left of Watanabe/Nakasono's *Seikaken* merged with Kamei Group, who had defected from Mitsuzuka Faction (*Seiwakai*, taken over by Mori Yoshirō), and formed a new faction called *Shisuikai*, in March 1999 ([Figure II-4]).

The *Jishasa* framework drawn by Katō, Yamazaki, and Nonaka Hiromu (or *Keiseikai*) was, on the surface, seemed to be brought about by their liberalist proclivity, but what molded its high level of trans-factional coherence was their anti-Ozawa sentiment. As Kitaoka describes:

In fact, ever since the Hosokawa coalition began to crack around February 1994, the first political axis evolved around Ozawa vs. anti-Ozawa rhetoric. *Jishasa* group within the LDP, SDP, Sakigake, DPJ, Sun Party, and non-mainstream within the LDP, often used the same anti-Ozawa rhetoric to justify their choices of action.⁵³

On the other hand, the advocates of the *Hoho* Framework grew increasingly repulsive toward the cross-factional alignment between *Kōchikai* and *Keiseikai*, and particularly their compromising agendas that incorporated socialists' policy requests, epitomized by "apology diplomacy" developed under the Murayama cabinet. As they witnessed Ozawa's cold-shouldering toward the Socialists which led to the breakup of the non-LDP eight-party alliance in 1994 as well as the emergence of *Jishasa* framework, the *Hoho* advocates, mostly hawkish conservatives within the LDP, sought the establishment of inter-party cooperation that can become the retaliation against *Jishasa* framework. Yet having been overpowered by *Jishasa* advocates in number, the *Hoho* line did not see much light under the leadership of Katō and Nonaka. The result of the 1996 general

⁵³ 北岡伸一 「『反小沢』から『反自民』へ——党優位体制は復活しない」 中央公論、1998年4月。36-47頁。

election, specifically the poor performance of the socialists, seemed to tilt the balance of power between the Jishasa and Hoho alliances in favor of the latter. Yet the Jishasa leadership managed to hold onto the internal power, by taking on a strategy of *ipponzuri*, luring those who defected LDP to join the NFP back to their old nest one by one and recovering a simple majority by September 1997 (Iio 2008:138-140).

Yet such supremacy of *Jishasa* Framework was not meant to last. There are two major consequences brought about by the result of the 1996 election: the disintegration of the NFP and weakening of *Jishasa* cooperation. First, the JSP and Sakigake dissolved the inter-cabinet coalition with the LDP after the 1996 general election. While the LDP needed cooperation from the socialists in the Upper House and the *Jishasa* advocates continued to emphasize the importance of bipartisan cooperation among liberalists, the socialists grew increasingly unwilling to get in line with the LDP, as the defections of its supporters grew significantly visible election after election. The tension between the LDP and the JSP was heightened regarding the 1997 budgetary bills, which illuminated the instability of the LDP-JSP-Sakigake alliance, eventually leading to the dissolution of LDP-JSP-Sakigake government altogether shortly before the 1998 Upper House election. Second, the breakup of the Ichi-Ichi line—the close tie between Ozawa Ichiro and Kōmeitō's Ichikawa Yūichi—came into light, as the Kōmeitō, intimidated by the LDP's relentless Sōka Gakkai bashing, only engaged in half-hearted support for the NFP and occasionally supported the LDP candidates in by-elections and local elections (Nakano 2016: 20-22). Other NFP members, including Hatoyama Ikuo, Hosokawa Morihiro, Ishiba Shigeru, and Hata Tsutomu, grew increasingly dissatisfied with Ozawa's strongman-like management of the party, and left the NFP to join or form other parties. When Ozawa decided to dissolve the NFP in December 1997, the NFP was disintegrated into six parliamentary groups, largely divided by former Kōmeitō members and those who later joined the formation of new DPJ.

The fall of the liberals within the LDP which began in the aftermath of the 1996 election is often marked as the beginning of LDP's 'rightward tilt' that was to continue in the following decades. Put differently, the end of *Jishasa* supremacy triggered the internal power struggle for leadership, rather than policy competitions within the LDP.

Yamaguchi (1997) argues that, if NFP had lasted a bit longer, then the political realignment might have taken place around parties, rather than being embodied as internal competition within the LDP between *Jishasa* and *Hoho* (54). As the LDP regained power in the Lower House, however, the policy competition came to take place *within* the LDP rather than being contested *among* parties (Ootake 1999: 81-82).⁵⁴

The complete power shift between the *Jishasa* and *Hoho* within the LDP was brought about by another electoral devastation in the 1998 Upper House election. LDP's high hopes of recovering a simple majority in the Upper House were shattered completely, ending up with only 103 of 252 seats. The result came as a shock especially because the LDP was regaining confidence after it had recovered a simple majority in the Lower House, while the initiative of the opposition forces hit the deadlock with the dissolution of the New Frontier Party at the end of previous year. With no viable opposition axis in sight, Hoshimoto Ryutaro-led LDP leadership believed that the party's one-party dominance was on its way to reclaim its place in Japan's political scene.⁵⁵ Kabashima (1998) assigns the reason for the LDP's loss to the increase in turnout rate and the floating voters' voting behaviors which preferred DPJ and the JCP over the LDP, who were unsatisfied with the economic performance of the LDP leadership. At the same time, he claims, the election elucidated the success of electoral cooperation among the opposition parties in thirty-five districts, especially the twenty districts where the Kōmeitō participated in the bipartisan efforts. Kōmeitō and Rengō engaged in electoral cooperation in fourteen districts, and Kōmeitō recommended eleven candidates who ran

⁵⁴ 「新選挙制度の下で行われた最初の選挙である1996年総選挙によって、自民党が過半数に近い議席を獲得し、民主党の支持率が低迷し、新進党からさみだれ式に離党者が出るようになって以後、日本の政界の変動は、自民党内部の自社さ派と保保派との対立を軸に展開することとなった。... 言い換えれば、この派閥横断的な対立は、少なくとも表面的には、同党の路線をめぐる対立となったのである。その対立軸は、一言で言えば、吉田以来の保守本流と第二臨調以来の新保守との対立の再現である。新保守の方は、実は鳩山・岸以来の吉田・保守本流批判の流れをくむものであり、改進黨・民主党の「本格的再軍備論」が、新保守の論理に転換し、大きく形を変えて再現されたものである。それに対して、保守本流は、社会党の主張にも配慮した「軽武装路線」の延長である。」(大嶽1999:81—82)

⁵⁵ 中央公論 1997年9月号 「自民一党支配は国民の選択か」 加藤紘一・ジェラルド・カーティス対談 28—43頁

as DPJ or independent candidates.⁵⁶

Perhaps the most significant consequence of the 1998 Upper House election was that it completely mutilated the *Jishasa* logic, and induced perceptual changes among some of the former *Jishasa* advocates within the LDP. Most drastic were Nonaka Hiromu and Kamei Shizuka. Nonaka, a member of Takashita-Obuchi-Hashimoto faction, was a well-known advocate on LDP-JSP-Sakigake alliance, often criticizing Ozawa and his NFP initiative centering on the Kōmeitō. As he assumed the position as the Chief Cabinet Secretary under the newly elected party president Obuchi Keizō, however, Nonaka completely changed his attitude toward the possibility of party alliance with Ozawa's Liberal Party and the Kōmeitō. Claiming that he would “bend the knees to Mr. Ozawa if that's what it took,” Nonaka acknowledged the vulnerability of the LDP as well as the essence of the number game that required cooperation with the parties which he once perceived as the LDP's worst enemies.⁵⁷ Moreover, it was Kamei Shizuka, who had also been known as *Jishasa* advocate, that arranged the meeting between Ozawa and Nonaka to realize LDP-Liberal Party cooperation (Nakakita 2014: 191-192; Nakano 2016: 23). Yet such ‘reconciliation’ of the former members of Takeshita faction was in truth merely a preliminary step toward LDP's ultimate goal of forming an alliance with the Kōmeitō. Coalition with the Liberal Party, who had only twelve seats in the Upper House, was not enough to give the LDP a simple majority in the Upper House. And the Kōmeitō had suggested that, if LDP formed a coalition with Liberal Party first, then it can serve as the cushion for the three-party alliance (Park 2011: 290-297). While some *Jishasa* leadership—including Katō himself—was not quite happy about reconciling with Ozawa Ichiro, it was the logic of staying in the ruling power that generated their choice of consenting to the idea of LDP-LP coalition. Along with swift side-switching of former anti-Ozawa groups, the establishment of the LDP-LP alliance symbolized the LDP's exceptional “will to power” that drives them to collectively overcome both internal and external differences in policy preferences and personal grudges.

The LDP's significantly distinct reactions to the two electoral defeats after the

⁵⁶ 公明新聞1999. 6. 24. 2頁

⁵⁷ 野中広務全回顧録「老兵は死なず」74頁

1995 and 1998 Upper House elections derived from changes in both compositions of the opposition forces and the LDP's internal power balance between *Jishasa* and *Hoho* advocates. After sealing the coalition agreement with the Liberal Party, the LDP leadership accelerates dives for cooperation with the Kōmeitō. The primary concerns for the LDP now shifts to securing electoral stability, an objective it shared with the future coalition partner of two decades.

3) **Obuchi's Courtship Dance**

In the dawn of LDP-Kōmeitō coalition, Kōmeitō was sometimes called a “bat” party.⁵⁸ The analogy reflected its vacillation between the LDP and other opposition parties, like the DPJ, both of which had own reasons to lure the Kōmeitō into their sides. While the LDP had concluded coalition agreement with Ozawa Ichiro's Liberal Party, the coalition government did not have the majorities in the Upper House. The DPJ, who had just begun to gain recognition as the new ‘opposition axis’ to the LDP, was also desperate to consolidate the battle front against the ruling coalition with the help from the Kōmeitō. Kōmeitō's indecisiveness between the two camps earned the party the reputation as the party that cannot fly a straight line, and instead took on an ad hoc strategy in achieving their immediate goals after the failure of the NFP initiative—restructuring of party organization and maintaining of party strength. Initially, the Kōmeitō's behaviors suggested that the party was keeping pace with the DPJ in confronting the LDP government. Addressing the launching of the Obuchi cabinet in July 1997, then the Kōmeitō's co-president Hamayotsu Toshiko claimed that the result of the 1998 Upper House election reflected the people's dissatisfaction with the LDP government, and declared that the Kōmeitō would fiercely fight the new cabinet and not “easily compromise.”⁵⁹ In October, the Kōmeitō and the DPJ worked together in pushing the legislation for granting suffrage to alien residents and opposed to the LDP-initiated Financial Reconstruction Law. At the press conference held after the first party convention as “New Kōmeitō” held on November 7, 1998, the newly elected party

⁵⁸ 朝日新聞1999年3月6日、7頁

⁵⁹ 公明新聞 1998年7月31日、1頁

president Kanzaki Takenori stated that the Kōmeitō would not cooperate with the LDP, and instead the party would engage in electoral cooperation with other opposition parties in the next general election.⁶⁰ At the DPJ's regular party convention held on January 18, 1999, president Kanzaki compared the relationship between the Kōmeitō and DPJ to brotherhood:

I believe that the DPJ and the Kōmeitō share the same basic values ... and I hope that we will continue to fight together this year as well. ... DPJ is the first-born son, and everybody respects and has hopes for him. ... [Kōmeitō] is the second son, and we may be troublemakers at times, but please be patient with us. We are determined to be obedient and follow the big brother's lead in the fight.⁶¹

He even goes on to criticize Ozawa Ichiro and his decision to form an alliance with the LDP, claiming that Ozawa was the front-runner with the banner of anti-Obuchi cabinet, and simply stated, "I don't know what happened there."

The Kōmeitō's adamant attitude against the Obuchi cabinet since the latter half of the 1990s was motivated by its conviction that the voters were disapproving of the LDP government, and that the non-LDP stance would bring in more votes in the upcoming local election scheduled to be held in following April. At the same time, however, the possibility of cooperation with the LDP seemed to have never entirely disappeared from the Kōmeitō's strategic choices either. In fact, even though the Kōmeitō occasionally put forward its non-LDP attitude, it was the idea of 'centrism,' rather than the 'alternative axis,' which the party used in justifying their policy inconsistency. As it was found in the party's 'new declaration' announced at the first party convention, the Kōmeitō was well aware of its position as the holder of 'casting vote' in the Diet.⁶² The party's 'centrist rhetoric' splashed across the action agendas mirrored Kōmeitō's ambiguity about its future direction as much as its determination to keep both potential cooperation partners—LDP and DPJ—at arm's length for the time being. After all, the Kōmeitō's immediate concerns lay in the upcoming local election, which they perceived as the first trial where the party must prove to itself that its organization survived the mess created

⁶⁰ 公明新聞 1998年11月8日、2頁

⁶¹ 公明新聞 1999年1月19日 1頁

⁶² 公明新聞 1998年11月8日 3頁

by the series of political realignment.

While the immediate goal of the Kōmeitō rested upon the reconstruction of support bases and prepare for local as well as general elections, Prime Minister Obuchi's concern was laid upon consolidating his leadership both within the LDP and in the Diet. After assuming Hashimoto Ryūtarō's position in the aftermath of the 1998 Upper House election, the cabinet was forced to operate under the 'twisted Diet,' and some faction leaders, including Katō Koichi and Yamazaki Taku, were still hesitant when it came to cooperating with Ozawa Ichiro. Facing the necessity of securing parliamentary stability, PM Obuchi, with the help from Chief Cabinet Secretary Nonaka Hiromu, began the 'tug-of-war' with the oppositions in order to lure Kōmeitō into their side. The Kōmeitō-courting was a means to both establish parliamentary stability in the Diet, as well as to consolidate centralized leadership within the LDP by keeping Katō and Yamazaki factions at bay. Put differently, the Obuchi cabinet's approach to the Kōmeitō was a means to achieve victory in the inter-factional contests for leadership, as well as to secure smooth operation in the parliament.

i. Regional Coupon Program and Dissolution of Lower House

The first 'carrot' presented by the Obuchi cabinet to the Kōmeitō in order to grease the wheel for coalition negotiation was the 'regional coupon' program. The Kōmeitō, as they prepared for the reorganization of the New Kōmeitō, suggested to distribute regional coupon worth JPY 30,000 for every individual, with total budget amounting to JPY 4 trillion. Despite criticism as 'dole-out policy,' the Obuchi cabinet accepted Kōmeitō's proposal as "economic stimulus," agreeing to distribute JPY 20,000 per every individual younger than 15 years of age and older than 65. Even though the total budget was largely reduced to about JPY 700 billion, the policy had enough impact for the political party that had just been reorganized few months before. The regional coupons became available for use on April 1, 1999, just in time for the general local election.

The regional coupon program was the first occasion that LDP revealed its willingness to incorporate Kōmeitō's policy demands into their agenda. At the same time, the LDP was making steady progress for future coalition formation with the Kōmeitō. On November 19, 1998, the LDP formed a coalition with Ozawa's Liberal Party. Kōmeitō's

Kanzaki Takenori, responding to the LDP-LP liaison, commented that “it still does not change the fact that the Kōmeitō has the casting vote in the Diet.”⁶³

In approaching the Kōmeitō, the LDP did more than luring it with carrots; its most effective strategy was to present ‘sticks’ at the same time. For the Kōmeitō, the most unnerving ‘stick’ was a means that could meddle with the timing of elections. In April, 1999, some LDP members mentioned the possibility that PM Obuchi might move up the schedule for presidential election (which was scheduled to be held in September) and hold ‘surprise’ Lower House election before summer. Kōmeitō, who was in the middle of general local election, was not ready to fight another nationwide election. What the LDP leadership hoped to accomplish by ‘bluffing’ to dissolve the Lower House was Kōmeitō’s cooperation in passing pressing bills, such as New Defense Guideline, which needed passing in the Lower House before Obuchi left for summit meeting with President Clinton on April 29. At first, Kōmeitō demanded some modifications to be made, including banning of ship inspection without UN approval, containing of overseas activities within the framework of US-Japan alliance, and clarifying of the definition of ‘surrounding areas.’ Yet in the end, the Kōmeitō voted for the LDP-LP proposal in the Lower House Committee held on April 26, one day after the local general election was held.

After the passing of defense guideline legislation, Kōmeitō’s approach toward the LDP, and vice versa, became more blatant. In the following months, the Obuchi cabinet’s courtship dance toward the Kōmeitō only accelerated. On April 27, 1999, then Chief Cabinet Secretary Nonaka Hiromu made the first official proposal to the leaders of the Liberal Party and the Kōmeitō for the consolidation of three-party cooperation framework, with future possibility of establishing coalition government.⁶⁴ The next day, Kōmeitō’s party president Kanzaki Takenori and DPJ’s Kan Naoto equally stated to the press that the two parties are retracting previously-made promise for electoral cooperation in the next general election.⁶⁵ The question, at that point, was no longer

⁶³ 公明新聞 1999. 11. 20. 1頁

⁶⁴ 朝日新聞 1999年4月29日、1頁。

⁶⁵ 朝日新聞 1999年4月29日、2頁

whether the LDP and Kōmeitō would cooperate in the Diet; the question was whether the two parties would form inter-cabinet coalition government.

ii. Electoral System Reform and the Reduction of PR Seats

When cooperating with the LDP in the passing of defense guideline legislation, Kōmeitō asked for more than not to dissolve the Lower House; it asked for the entire revaluation on the electoral system. The highest point of LDP's Kōmeitō-courting was marked by the LDP leadership's agreement to launch the all-party consultative body for the LH electoral system reform, with an added promise of not to dissolve the Diet without informing the Kōmeitō in advance.⁶⁶

The LDP and Liberal Party had agreed in January 1999 that the government would reduce of the number of PR seats in the Lower House from 200 to 150 before the next general election, as a part of policy fulfillment in reducing the number of LH representatives. The Kōmeitō immediately responded that if the coalition government pressed through such legislation, then the Kōmeitō would have no choice but to fiercely oppose the government. In reality, however, this two-party agreement became the critical reason for the Kōmeitō to join the coalition formation in a matter of six months. The Kōmeitō's concern was laid upon the reduction of the quota for PR tier, in which most of its representatives were to be elected. In response to the 'threat' of reducing the number of PR seats, the Kōmeitō called for a drastic electoral reform, pointing to the shortcomings of the new electoral rule that breed "too many wasted votes."⁶⁷ Arguing that the new electoral rule would not produce alteration of power as they had hoped, the Kōmeitō urged to amend such rules as 'double candidacy' and districting rule, and instead re-implement mid-sized multimember system with district magnitude of three in each 150 districts.

Kōmeitō hoped that other opposition parties to share the same concerns. The DPJ, however, did not share the Kōmeitō's sense of urgency. Kōmeitō made a suggestion to

⁶⁶ 朝日新聞 1999年5月14日、1-2頁。Kōmeitō asked for the establishment of all-party consultation committee for Lower House electoral system reform (衆議院選挙制度改革与野党協議機関)。

⁶⁷ 公明新聞 1999年2月24日 3頁

establish inter-party negotiation table to discuss the electoral system reform, to which Hata Tsutomu, then the DPJ's secretary-general, replied rather indifferently that such matter should be brought to the special committee on the investigation of the revision of Public Offices Election Act. While Kōmeitō's Fuyushiba Tetsuzo claimed that the combined system must be reevaluated, the DPJ remained hesitant in implementing entirely new electoral rule.⁶⁸ The DPJ's reluctance in pushing forward another electoral system reform seemed to have derived not only from its self-regard as the enforcer of political reform throughout the 1990s, but also from the presumption that the party had a reasonable chance of overthrowing the LDP in the next general election. Simply speaking, the DPJ perceived the LDP's devastating loss at the 1998 election and its internal power struggle that followed as the chance to go on an offensive. Yet the Kōmeitō did not share the same preference; Kōmeitō's concerns lay in the electoral prospects, and to find the ground for 'survival'—even if it meant to take on another electoral system reform. The mismatch of preferences between the DPJ and the Kōmeitō seemed to have been induced by the differences in their goals; while the DPJ's goal rested on overthrowing the LDP and becoming the ruling party, that of Kōmeitō's was to maintain its party strength and remain relevant between the two largest parties in the parliament.

While the Kōmeitō was eager to press forward the debate on electoral system reform and revive the mid-sized multimember system, however, the LDP was far from sharing the same enthusiasm. In fact, no party was serious about reversing the electoral system. Nonaka was adamant from the beginning that changing the electoral system before the next general election was “almost impossible,”⁶⁹ and the DPJ also expressed its preference for the combined electoral system and claimed that it could not engage in the electoral cooperation with the Kōmeitō “if Kōmeitō keeps pushing for the reinstitution of multimember system.”⁷⁰ Even though Kōmeitō managed to bring all parties to agree upon the launching of committee on the electoral system reform, it was well aware of the difficulty of implementing a new electoral system before the next

⁶⁸ 公明新聞 1999年2月25日、1頁

⁶⁹ 朝日新聞 1999年4月29日、1頁。

⁷⁰ 朝日新聞 1999年4月29日、2頁

general election. In fact, party's then secretary-general Fuyushiba Tetsuzo claimed that the policy direction and electoral system reform must be considered as two different agendas—insinuating that the Kōmeitō would consider discussing policies with the LDP even if the electoral system reform did not become a reality.

Vacillating between inter-cabinet and non-cabinet coalitions, the decisive 'carrot' that essentially drove Kōmeitō to forming the inter-cabinet coalition with the LDP was the possibility of the reduction of PR seats. As the prospects for electoral system reform grew dim, Kōmeitō had to prepare itself for the next general election which could be held at any point. In order to survive under the new electoral system, however, Kōmeitō had no choice but to rely on the PR portion of the districts. In other words, it could not afford to having the LDP reduce the number of PR seats in accordance with the two-party agreement with the Liberal Party.

Sandwiched between Liberal Party, who demanded the reduction of PR seats to be carried out before the next general election, and the Kōmeitō, who was ready to do whatever it took to stop that from happening, the LDP's choice was to take Kōmeitō's side. The reason was quite simple. The Obuchi cabinet hoped to establish inter-cabinet coalition with the Kōmeitō in order to enhance the level of stability in the parliament, and it was the Kōmeitō's seats, rather than those of Liberal Party, the LDP needed more. The price Kōmeitō paid in order to stop the LDP and the Liberal Party from implementing the reduction of fifty PR seats was quite high, in terms of the party's ideological integrity. Despite Sōka Gakkai's expressed misgivings, Kōmeitō voted in favor for controversial legislations—including wiretap legislation and Act on National Flag and Anthem, both of which were quite unpopular among the supporters and most of all, went against the party's long-standing stance on pacifism and centrism.⁷¹ The Kōmeitō's behaviors during this period brought many to question the party's policy identity that seemed to be deviating from its original 'pacifist' and progressive outlook. And not only did the former cooperation partners such as the DPJ or socialists raised eyebrows to Kōmeitō's side-switching, so did its members as well as the supporters. The backbenchers within the Kōmeitō and local organizations, who had worked closely with

⁷¹ 朝日新聞 1999年6月5日、2、6頁

the DPJ and socialists during elections, expressed discontent to the idea of overturning its non-LDP stance.⁷² In spite of those unapproving voices, however, the Kōmeitō's utmost concerns were laid upon the electoral consequences. Essentially, the party calculated that recanting the non-LDP stance would cost less than competing for few PR seats in terms of electoral prospects.

Going back to the question of why the coalition formation was finalized in July 1999, a simple answer would be it was because the launching of coalition government had to take place after the general local election in April and before the LDP's presidential election scheduled in September. In other words, it was necessary for the Kōmeitō to maintain its legitimacy as 'non-LDP' force throughout the process of reconstructing its own support base after the failure of the NFP initiative. For the LDP, on the other hand, Prime Minister Obuchi had incentive to consolidate the parliamentary stability by incorporating Kōmeitō into the cabinet coalition, in order to establish his leadership and smooth his way for the second election to the president of the LDP. Put differently, the timing of the coalition formation, as well as the logic behind it, was largely determined by the timing and the rules of election. Kōmeitō's sensitive approach to the coalition formation and the engineering of 'best possible timing' reveal the high level of caution when it came to holding hands with the LDP, which in itself unveils the leadership's concern for political legitimacy. At the same time, for the Kōmeitō, the essence of political legitimacy derived from electoral rationalism, while for the LDP it was dominated by the logic of internal power struggle within factional practices.

Looking back on the formation process, the forming of LDP-Kōmeitō coalition was not the result of undivided consensus among the members of participating parties, but came about as the perceptions converged between the two leaderships. Kōmeitō, facing the growing concerns from its supporters, explained why the party had no choice but to recant their original non-LDP stance:

1. The result of the 1998 Upper House election consolidated the 'era of coalition,' and the LDP itself had no choice but to change their attitude.
2. In the Diet, the DPJ, who holds the 'casting vote,' has been unable to behave as a

⁷² 朝日新聞 1999年5月29日、6頁

‘responsible’ opposition because it focuses too much on expressing anti-LDP stance. Instead, Kōmeitō has taken on the responsibility and continued to make policy decisions for the people. Recently, however, some begin to question the validity of such ad hoc decision-making processes.

3. Recently, Japan is surrounded by pressing crises—from economic stagnation, depredation of education, to dismantlement of society—and now is not the time to make political decisions based on LDP and non-LDP cleavage.⁷³

They went on to argue that the LDP-Kōmeitō coalition was a merge of conservatives and centrists, and promise not to make the same mistake as the socialists by changing the core ideological and policy preferences. As fast as the Kōmeitō’s change of clothes, the LDP as also equally quick in taking back their previous allegations against the Kōmeitō and Sōka Gakkai.⁷⁴ Given the history of the two-party relationship, it is no question that the policy or ideological compatibility was not the first thing on their minds. Many claim that it was the logic of number games in the name of political stability that drove the Obuchi cabinet into ‘reconciling’ with Sōka Gakkai and the Kōmeitō.⁷⁵

Yet that the LDP-Kōmeitō coalition came about simply because the LDP lost the simple majority in the 1998 Upper House election does not explain the longevity of the partnership. Rather, the logic of ‘number game,’ as Kitaoka Shinichi (2000) pointed out, operated at the level of electoral—instead of parliamentary—alliance:

Forming the coalition alliance with the Kōmeitō was a very much LDP-like decision. A lot of people believe that the LDP would lose if they worked with the Kōmeitō. Why would they make a decision that is likely to lead to overall defeat? That is because, a lot of LDP members do think that [the cooperation with the Kōmeitō] is advantageous for them. Whether Sōka Gakkai works for us or them is a critically important issue for each LDP candidate. Therefore, many are actually in favor of coalition with the Kōmeitō, except for perhaps those who have expressed strong anti-Gakkai sentiments.⁷⁶

In fact, amid the policy negotiation among LDP, Liberal Party, and the Kōmeitō, the most contentious issue was the reduction of the number of LH members—more specifically, where the ‘reduction’ of fifty seats would take place. While the LDP and the Liberal

⁷³ 公明新聞 1999年7月26日 3頁

⁷⁴ 朝日新聞 1999年7月13日 7頁

⁷⁵ For example, see 佐々木毅. 1999. 8. 9. 「小渕政権の原点と権力の力学」 朝日新聞論壇(4頁).

平井勉. 1999. 「ベールを脱いだ『小渕政治』」 中央公論、1999年12月号.

⁷⁶ 北岡伸一 「連立政権は続くのか」 中央公論2000年2月号 34-41頁.

party had included in their original coalition agreement that the number of PR quota to be reduced from 200 to 150 before the next general election, Kōmeitō insisted to carry out more comprehensive districting reform—which would include the reduction of the number of single-member districts. The LDP and the Liberal Party, whose incumbents had relatively salient personal support bases in their districts, had little incentives to reduce the chances of winning in the districts, while the Kōmeitō, as a small party, had to rely heavily on proportional representation tier in electing their candidates. In other words, the development of three-party negotiation evolved around electoral prospects, and, as epitomized by the quick recanting of previous antagonism, the LDP and the Kōmeitō did not have much problem when it came to narrowing the policy gap or overcoming the personal grudges against one another.

The Obuchi cabinet's courtship to the Kōmeitō came to an end as the decision was made to reduce the number of PR by twenty, instead of fifty. By the end of year 1999, the cold-shouldered Ozawa leaves the Liberal Party with his protégé, leaving Conservative Party behind. And, the number of outright anti-Sōka Gakkai LDP members largely declined, as Shirakawa Katsuhiko's statement of position against inter-cabinet coalition with the Kōmeitō was only signed by eighteen members (Shirakawa 2000:183-184).

3. LDP-Kōmeitō Alliance in Urban Local Assemblies

Before discussing the institutionalization process of the LDP-Kōmeitō electoral alliance, it is necessary to shed light on the pre-alliance relationship of the two parties on the local level, which became one of the critical pillars of sustained cooperative relationship for decades to come. That Kōmeitō stood on the non-LDP front throughout the Cold War period was only partially true, for the party engaged in a number of joint efforts with the LDP in the management of local governance and elections. Sasaki (2011) points out that the LDP-Kōmeitō alliance at the national level is an extension of two-party alliance that began in Tokyo's metropolitan assembly in 1971 (69-70). In Kyoto gubernatorial election held in 1970, Kōmeitō supported a joint candidate with LDP who ran against JCP-endorsed Ninagawa Torazō. Yakushiji (2016: 65-67) argues that the Kōmeitō occasionally cooperated with the LDP in local elections since the late 1960s,

because it felt obliged to repay Tanaka Kakuei who “protected” Kōmeitō from the progressive parties’ adamant attacks against Ikada Daisaku and Sōka Gakkai during the press suppression incident.⁷⁷ Put simply, while the Kōmeitō put forth its non-LDP attitude in the Diet throughout the Cold War period, on the local level, the LDP-Kōmeitō framework (against the progressives) had been in place long before the formation of two-party alliance at the national level. And such gap between Kōmeitō’s differing positioning between local and national party competition requires explanation.

The Kōmeitō’s divergent behaviors vis-à-vis LDP in local and national politics in the postwar years derive from the characteristics of urban political landscape of postwar Japan. With the formation of Kōmeitō in 1964, Japanese politics entered the second phase of LDP’s one-party predominance—namely the era of the multi-partism (Curtis 1988). Coupled with the split of the JSP that bred Democratic Socialist Party (DSP) in 1960, the births of new parties, including Kōmeitō (1964) and New Liberal Club (1976) accelerated not only the degree of opposition failure but also the rivalry among opposing parties. In particular, such competitions among the opposition parties were salient in urban regions, due to relatively large district magnitude under the mid-sized multi-member district system. Sunahara (2012a) argues that the fundamental reason why multi-partism was particularly salient in the urban regions was because of the electoral system. Under the multi-member district system with single non-transferable vote, large prefectures, such as Tokyo, Osaka, Nagoya, were given four to five magnitude in each district, which brought about the convergence of the number of political parties competing in the urban regions between four to five. He goes on to argue that such dispersed party system was one of the critical reason why the LDP-led central government was unable to carry out cohesive policy implementations toward populated administrative units, point out relatively little political influence LDP was able to impose in urban regions (69-73).

In relations to this point, another characteristic of the local party politics in the urban regions under the LDP’s one-party dominance that the voters tended to favor non-

⁷⁷ Nakano (2016) has also pointed out that the press suppression incident became the turning point for the close relationship between Kōmeitō and Tanaka Kakuei (35-36).

LDP, progressive parties, whose central political agenda addressed the ‘city problems’ that were often overlooked by the LDP. Under the LDP’s one-party dominance throughout the period of economic growth, the rural-based LDP spent most of its energy ‘re-distributing’ capital and socio-economic resources accumulated in the growing urban cities back to the increasingly dependent rural regions. Such pork-barreling drove the wedge between the LDP’s governance design and the urban cities, leading to the births of so-called ‘progressive local governments’ throughout the 60s and 70s particularly in large metropolitan regions (Soga and Machidori 2007, 145-156).

At the same time, the popularity of progressive governors did not necessarily induce alignment of so-called progressive parties, but instead often created tension among them. One reason was that the progressive parties found it necessary to find a way to distinguish themselves from one another, in order to win in the multi-member district system in both national and local elections. Another reason, particularly for the Kōmeitō, was embedded in the political proclivity of its supporters. The ‘image’ of Kōmeitō as progressive or ‘non-LDP’ is only true in the party’s ideological inclination, but the voting behaviors of the Kōmeitō supporters suggest otherwise. Below [Table II-1] shows a survey result conducted by Association for Fair Elections (*kōmeisenkyorenmei*), which

Table II-1 Changes in Party Support in LH Election (1963 and 1967 general elections)

1963 1967								
	LDP	JSP	DSP	JCP	IND.	OTHER	NA	NV
KŌMEITŌ	31.9	27.5	2.9	1.4	5.8	2.9	5.8	21.7
LDP	86.3	3.0	0.4	--	0.2	--	2.8	7.4
JSP	10.0	74.2	0.7	--	0.2	--	1.8	13.2
DSP	21.3	16.2	47.8	1.5	--	--	5.1	8.1
JCP	3.1	12.5		62.5	--	--	31.1	18.8
IND.	34.6	26.9	3.8	--	7.7	--	15.4	11.5
OTHER	--	--	--	--	--	40.0	40.0	20.0
NA	6.5	2.5	0.5	--	1.0	0.5	73.0	16.0
NV	29.6	17.8	1.9	1.6	0.3	0.3	12.1	36.4

*Cited from Nishijima (1968: 124); NA (data not available), NV(did not vote); Sample (3,000)

shows the comparison of voters' voting decisions in the 1963 and 1967 general elections . Kōmeitō did not field its candidate in general election before 1967, therefore in 1963, the potential Kōmeitō voters voted for other existing parties. The data shows that, of those who voted for the Kōmeitō in 1967, 31.9% voted for the LDP candidates and 27.5% voted for JSP, while more than 20% did not exercise their voting right. If we combined the percentage of Kōmeitō voters who voted for DSP and JCP in the 1963 election, then the Kōmeitō voters are divided sharply between those who voted for conservative candidates (LDP) and progressive ones (JSP, DSP, and JCP). In other words, the characterization of Kōmeitō voters as having been 'progressive' in the pre-alliance era is not necessarily an accurate description of this socio-political group.

There is another study that analyzes the two elections held in 1963 and 1967, and the vote gains of each candidate who ran in eleven districts where Kōmeitō fielded its candidates for the first time in 1967 (Tanaka 2005: 83-84). The analysis shows that the Kōmeitō's vote gains in the 1967 election are almost equal to the number of vote losses of the LDP and JSP candidates in those districts, based on which the author concludes that, before the 1967 general election, Kōmeitō votes were equally divided between LDP and JSP.⁷⁸ In other words, the political stance of the Kōmeitō and its supporters was not one-sided, but rather mixed from the beginning. Shimada (2007) argues that such 'double-identity' of Kōmeitō supporters is rooted in the history of their migration from conservative rural regions to progressive urban cities during the period of high economic growth, which created a social group that is conservative by nature but grew progressive as they became incorporated into lower strata of social hierarchy (133-135).

While the social origins of the Kōmeitō supporters may explain why they would support conservative candidates as much as progressive ones, it fails to explain why the party's behaviors often varied between local and national political scenes. It is perhaps more convincing to argue that, after the Kōmeitō entered national politics in the second half of the 1960s, the party's policy positions were determined not only by the supporters'

⁷⁸ For detailed analysis, refer to Tanaka (2005: 83-84). He also adds that the Kōmeitō candidates in urban districts brought in new Kōmeitō voters who did not vote before 1967, which amounts to 5.3% of total vote gains by the Kōmeitō candidates.

ideological inclinations or socioeconomic backgrounds, but also by the party's power balance in relations to other political parties. In other words, while at the national level the LDP's predominance urged the Kōmeitō to take on more progressive stance and perhaps cooperate occasionally with other non-LDP forces, in urban politics at the local level, the relatively high competitiveness of the progressive parties—such as JSP and JCP—against conservative forces led Kōmeitō to take on autonomous stance in order to allow ad hoc cooperative mechanism to function in the maximization of their political and electoral interests. Even though the history of LDP-Kōmeitō relations at local levels in the urban regions throughout the period of economic growth is beyond the scope of this study, it is critical to point out that the local cooperative mechanism became the key for the later institutionalization of 'electoral alliance,' as well as in understanding what often appears to be 'erratic' behaviors of local Kōmeitō in urban regions.

III. FLEXIBLE ENGAGEMENT: HOW UNEQUAL DISTRIBUTION OF ELECTORAL RESOURCES IS ADJUSTED

1. “Situated Rationality”: Explaining Preference Formation and Change

In dealing with the LDP-Kōmeitō coalition alliance, one of the fundamental causes of rather rigid understanding of inter-party ‘cooperation’ derives from the fact that most existing studies (or casual assessment of two-party alliance) focus solely on electoral system as the generator of cooperation. In other words, the newly-introduced electoral rule is perceived as the (almost only) institutional setting that induces cooperation, because of the opportunity structures it provides to both sides. Such assessment has logical appeal and contains a significant degree of truth to it—the LDP-Kōmeitō alliance might not have come to form if not for the introduction of the new rule. At the same time, however, electoral system alone is not the only institution that constrains the behaviors of political actors; political actors are surrounded by both formal and informal institutions that in the end formulate their own, divergent, opportunity structures.

For example, there is an issue of ‘recommendation system.’ For every national election, Kōmeitō carries out individual-based candidate evaluation procedure vis-à-vis LDP candidates. Yet the number of recommendations from the Kōmeitō to the LDP fluctuates across elections; some candidates have always received recommendations, while others choose not to. There are also cases where an LDP candidate receives Kōmeitō’s recommendation, but chooses not to do so in the following election. If recommendation from the Kōmeitō represents the party-level ‘promise’ of electoral cooperation between the Kōmeitō and the specific LDP candidates and guarantee the full-fledged cooperation from the Kōmeitō supporters, then there is no reason for LDP candidates, who are, after all, all competing under the same electoral rule, not to receive it from the Kōmeitō. In fact, that the negotiations over recommendation takes place based on candidate-based individual evaluations, rather than the leadership-level collective negotiation, would itself be puzzling, if the electoral rule alone is the determinant of the existence of electoral cooperation between the two parties. It is clear that the LDP candidates’ relationships with the Kōmeitō, and vice versa, are framed not by only by the

electoral rules but also by their strategic choices toward achieving their political goals that derive not only from the formal rules but also from the informal ones—like personal relations or history of the specific district. In other words, though critically important, electoral rule is only one of institutional settings based on which the actors' strategic choices are shaped.

In essence, the issue is related to long-time debate among institutionalists over the question of preference formation—where preferences come from. The question of preference formation has been one of the critical dividing points of rational-choice approach to institutionalism (RCI) and historical/social constructivist (HI) one (Kaznelson and Weingast 2005).⁷⁹ Traditionally, economists and rational-choice theorists assumed actors' preferences to be exogenous, or given, regardless of circumstances. Just like it is human nature to seek survival, get rich, or gain power, the goal of politicians is downsized and defined, for example, as 'reelection,' 'promotion,' and 'policy implementation.' Yet such simplification of preferences has long been a target of criticism, particularly by social constructivist and historical institutionalist approaches. The critical distinction between RCI and HI in the understanding of preference formation is that, while the preferences are simply 'assumed' by RCI, the historical institutionalists claim that the preferences are socially and historically constructed, and even the strategies as well as goals of political actors are the products of institutional arrangements (Thelen and Steinmo 1992). In their perspective, that preferences are simply 'given' contains fundamental limitation on the understanding of human behaviors, for individuals' rationalities are shaped not only by their interests, but also by socially- and historically-derived institutional settings.

It is not to say, however, rational-choice theory has avoided the question of preference formation and change. In fact, a number of rational-choice theorists have

⁷⁹ Recently, there has been a growing number of attempts to find the 'link' between two approaches to institutionalism: "Institutions have come to play three critical roles in this body of work. First, understood as historical products, they provide links between unsettled moments of great transformation and more ordinary times. Second, they constrain and shape human beliefs, values, interests and the way these are deployed to shape outcomes. Third, and this is the leading point of contact with RCI, they are understood to generate preferences" (Kaznelson and Weingast 2005, 14).

acknowledged the problem of ‘instability of preferences’—namely that the preferences of an agent do change over time (Hansson 1995; Grune-Yanoff and Hansson 2009). For them, the changes in preferences are caused by changes in beliefs, which are caused by the changes in the agent’s experiences or the acquiring of new information regarding unforeseen possibilities (Dietrick and List 2003). Others have also paid attention to the importance of agent’s perceptual change that alter the order of preferences or preference set as a whole, which cause the changes in ‘extrinsic preferences’ in an attempt to maximize ‘expected utility’ of an action (Cadhlac et al. 2015). Fundamentally, rational-choice approach puts forward that the changes in beliefs, which are caused by new experiences or acquiring of new information, cause agent to change or revise his/her (order of) preferences. What they fail to address, on the other hand, is that such belief change ultimately takes place within individuals’ domain. It does not address the fact that even the changes in a person’s beliefs only occurs within the already existing ‘institutions’—a sphere to which he/she has the access. In other words, rational-choice theorists cannot explain why two actors, given the same new information or experiences, may form different preferences. The underlying problem of rational-choice approach to preference formation and change derives from its inability to contextualize actor’s cognitive as well as relational limitations, along with its static understanding of institutions which is perceived only as the imposer of constraints on the actor’s behaviors, rather than recognizing the mutually-constructing relationship between actor’s behaviors and institutions.

Recognizing the limitation of rational-choice approach to preference formation and change, historical institutionalists have placed heavy emphasis on the importance of ‘institutions’ as the generator of preferences. Wildaysky (1987), applying cultural theory to preference formation, argued that it is the “institutional arrangements” and “their constituting reinforcement, modification, and rejection of existing power relationships teaches them what to prefer” (5). Furthermore, HI argues that simplification of preference is problematic in that it does not reflect the complex compositions of human rationality, which consists not only of their interests but also of social relations, customs, and historical process. Hall (2005) points out that these ‘institutional arrangements as

well as historical circumstances create actors with multiple interests and identities, and when forming preferences, they are forced to weigh the “net costs and benefits of the multiple effects of the action”:

[F]orming preferences entails a process of aggregation in which the net costs and benefits of the multiple effects of the action must be assessed and weights attached to each of the interests potentially affected by the action. This process can be affected by how the issue is framed—by the identities salient to the actor, and by an organizational politics in which units with specific interests conflict with one another. (Hall 2005, 134)

What is implied here is the ‘learning process’ embedded in the preference formation and change. The limited information and knowledge of an actor is compensated by the experiences as well as the acquiring of new information, based on which the configuration of ‘rational action’ also undergoes modification within the institutional setting which surrounds the political actor.

What needs to be emphasized here is that, in forming strategic action, political actors are bound not only by the lack of knowledge but also by conflict of interests. Social taboos or eyebrow-raising behaviors, for example, often constrain actor’s choices even when actors know for sure that breaking them would bring them closer to achieving their goals. Or, actor’s choices may be constrained by the possible consequences of taking a certain path, which might close the door for another. In other words, the social relations, as much as cognitive limitations of the actor, shapes the rationality for strategic choice.

Such conception of ‘situated rationality’ that derives from historical institutionalist approach to ‘bounded/procedural rationality’ perceives formations of preferences and behaviors as constrained both by social relations and historical context (path-dependent), and their ‘rationalities’ are situated not only within actor’s goals but also within the context, conventions, relationships, experiences, and traditions, among others (Granovetter 1985:493; Katznelson 1999: 208). Put differently, rationality is not measured by whether or not a certain action allowed the actor to move closer to achieving his/her goal, but rather whether the action was ‘situationally rational’ (Park 1998: 57-65). ‘Situated rationality’ is defined as ‘the temporary and spatially located sequential and interactional rationality of daily life’ (Townley 2008: 132); rationality is

perceived as an ongoing construction process that inter-subjectively transforms depending on the contextual settings. The critical departing point of situated rationality from bounded rationality is that it places emphasis on the ‘developing’ aspect of rationality, which transforms as the actor acquires new experiences and information.

Fundamentally, ‘situated rationality’ approach would allow us to trace ongoing reconfiguration of rationality that leads to changes in preferences among political actors. In the context of the LDP-Kōmeitō cooperation, empirical findings suggest that what appears to be a monolithic and highly centralized electoral cooperation is in fact both diverse and precarious, depending on both external and internal contextual settings. Such diversities occur because of the conflicting/converging ‘situated rationalities’ of individual political actors, whose behaviors are constrained not only by their political goals but also by their social and political relations.

2. Flexible Adjustments on Three Polity Levels

One of the prevalent misconceptions about the nature of LDP-Kōmeitō electoral alliance is that it takes place equally across elections and districts because of the high level of loyalty and coherence among the Kōmeitō supporters, who are, essentially, recognized synonymously as ‘Sōka Gakkai believers.’ While it is undoubtedly true that the Sōka Gakkai members and Kōmeitō voters largely overlap, and that they are quite avid supporters of Kōmeitō, when it comes to cooperation with the LDP, the same level of enthusiasm is rarely observed. In fact, the institutionalization of the electoral alliance between the two parties has been characterized by the attempts to attain maximum electoral benefits while minimizing risks. The Kōmeitō as well as the LDP have established such system so that they may maximize their benefits with the smallest cost possible; the electoral cooperation between the two parties, in other words, is characterized by unequal distribution of electoral resources.

The institutionalization of the process of electoral cooperation characterized by risk-aversion had, above anything else, derived from the past relationships between the two parties. Even though the LDP and Kōmeitō leaders decided to clean the slate, it does not mean that the long history of confrontation between the two parties did not leave a

lasting mark. The leadership's decision to form a cabinet coalition was only one aspect of institutionalization of the coalition alliance. As mentioned above, the inter-party agreement between the LDP and Kōmeitō was not signed as the result of undivided consensus among party members, and instead bred confusion—and even aversion sometimes—at the district level. And the leaders were well aware of the local discontent toward the central leadership's decision. Because of this, the institutionalization process of electoral alliance was colored by the leadership's attempt to assuage personal as well as local discontents. At the same time, the institutionalization of electoral cooperation mechanism must be contextualized within the process of forging two types of support organizations—one personal and one party-oriented—into one, single pool of votes.

The uniqueness of the LDP-Kōmeitō electoral cooperation derives from the fact that the 'cooperation' points to the bartering of votes during the general election, as well as general candidate coordination. Further, while pre-electoral coalition often refers to electoral cooperation among political parties that agree to "coordinate their campaigns, run joint candidates or joint lists" (Golder 2005: 652) in electoral systems that largely adopt PR system, the LDP-Kōmeitō electoral alliance functions most effectively in the SMD competitions. In any single-member districts, the Kōmeitō is unable to elect its candidate only with the votes from its supporters, where there can only be one winner. Knowing this, the Kōmeitō, in order to maintain its party strength, has incentives to withdraw from the SMD competitions and elect its representatives largely in PR tier. This creates a situation in which one of two votes that the Kōmeitō supporters possess (one for SMD and another for PR) is likely to go to waste. On the other hand, the LDP has an incentive to endorse as many candidates as possible in SMDs as well as in PR in order to sustain its dominance in the Diet. While the LDP candidates running in rural areas are relatively safe, however, the party's electoral vulnerability in urban districts creates the incentives to ask for cooperation from the Kōmeitō, whose support base is concentrated in the urban regions, such as Tokyo, Osaka, Kanagawa, and Hyogo. Yet the Kōmeitō's support is not given to the LDP freely; neither do all LDP candidates in reality ask for Kōmeitō's support. As mentioned in the previous section, Kōmeitō's electoral assets are solid yet limited. In order to maximize their interests by providing support for LDP

candidates, Kōmeitō has the incentives to spend as little resources as possible in maintaining the alliance relationship with the LDP. And whether the LDP candidates indeed seek Kōmeitō's help depends largely on their calculation—whether they can afford not to have Kōmeitō on their side in their districts.

This section highlights the methods through which such 'flexible adaptation' to surrounding institutions has been set up between the LDP and the Kōmeitō by looking at the 'flexible adjustment mechanism' at three policy levels—central, prefectural, and district levels. At the central level, the party leaderships reach agreement on the overall framework regarding policy directions and candidate coordination. After the inter-party negotiation at the central level is concluded, the bargaining for resource allocation commences at the prefectural level through candidate-based evaluation system. While the prefectural level negotiation determines not only whether to support the LDP candidates, but also how much support should be given—by 'timing' the execution of cooperation. Lastly, the final resource allocations of votes are micro-adjusted at district level through the mechanism of scaled mobilization.

1) **Central-Level Negotiation: Candidate Coordination and Policy Debate**

Before any specific terms of cooperation can be negotiated among the candidates or local party organizations, the very first thing the two parties must carry out is to agree upon the overall framework of inter-party cooperation both in terms of policy goals and candidate coordination. Upon the inauguration of three-party coalition government under the leadership of Prime Minister Obuchi, the LDP, Kōmeitō, and the Liberal Party signed an agreement on October 4, 1999, which put forward basic policy agreements as well as the promise of candidate coordination in single-member districts in the next general election. This first inter-party agreement discussed a wide range of policy directions, from economy, social welfare policies, national security, education, to environment.⁸⁰ But what stood out most was the clause on political reforms, in which the LDP essentially postpone the issue of the reduction of the PR seats by fifty, taking in the demands from the Kōmeitō. In the agreement, three parties declared to reduce the

⁸⁰ For the details of three-party agreement, refer to Hattori (2014) pp. 80-84

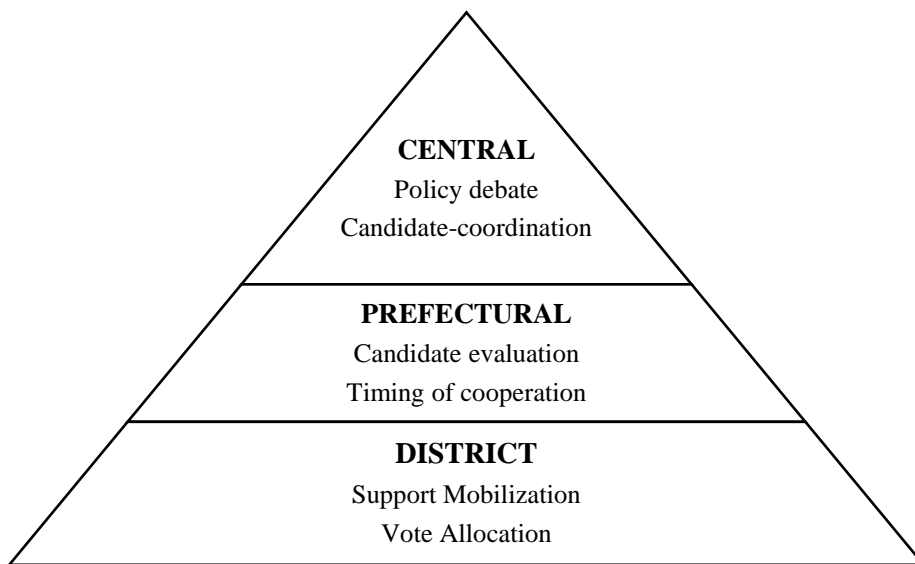


Figure III-1 Adjustment Mechanism on Three Polity Levels

number of PR seats by twenty, and regarding the remaining thirty seats, it simply said that the reduction will be made “mostly by reducing the number of single-member districts,” and the necessary legal procedure will follow the result of 2000 census data (Hattori 2014: 82). Based on the policy agreement among LDP, Kōmeitō, and Liberal Party, the three-party coalition government was launched on October 5, 1999.

In terms of electoral cooperation, the single most important function of the inter-party negotiation that takes place at the central level is candidate coordination. At the initial phase of LDP-Kōmeitō alliance, the central leaderships were unable to settle on the problem of district allocation in many urban districts (see Chapter IV). As the institutionalization of two-party alliance matured, however, the Kōmeitō reduced the number of district candidates during general election, which led to drastic mitigation of inter-party conflicts over the candidate coordination. On the other hand, it is during the negotiation process for Upper House elections when the inter-party negotiation often undergoes conflict of interests. Especially, relatively frequent redistricting for the multi-member district portion of Upper House election in the urban regions becomes the source of tension between the LDP and Kōmeitō.

Such source of inter-party conflicts at the central level is embedded within another significant function of the central-level negotiation: the evaluation of Kōmeitō candidates. While the LDP candidates are evaluated at the prefectural level (as it will be explored in the following section,) the LDP evaluates Kōmeitō candidates collectively at the central level and decides whether to give individual Kōmeitō candidates ‘recommendation.’ The electoral system adopted in the Upper House elections, partial multi-member district system, breeds competition between the LDP and Kōmeitō in multiple-seat constituencies, and ‘recommendation’ is not easily given to Kōmeitō counterpart. In an interview, an LDP member explained the situation where the inter-party negotiation can grow tense:

During Upper House elections, LDP and Kōmeitō candidates often must compete with one another in multiple-seat constituencies, which makes it difficult to carry out electoral cooperation. For example, last year [2016], the Kōmeitō asked us to give recommendations in five districts—Saitama, Kanagawa, Aichi, Hyogo, and Fukuoka—including the one where they fielded a candidate for the first time. In the previous election, we only gave one recommendation—so it was quite a big request on their

part. ... In Kanagawa's four-seat district, we [LDP] had two candidates already running with party endorsement. It could only induce competition over votes [with the Kōmeitō].⁸¹

While the conflict of interests often do occur at the central level, especially when the new districting rules are applied, the inter-party tension remains contained partially because of the small number of Kōmeitō candidates. The micro-level adjustment, on the other hand, commences as the 'executions' of electoral cooperation is delegated to the lower strata of politics.

2) **Candidate-Based Evaluations at Prefectural-Level**

i. ***Suisen* vs. *jishu-tohyō*: Candidate-Based Evaluation**

One critical apparatus through which the inter-party 'adjustment' regarding the allocation of electoral resources is carried out is the recommendation system, a tool through which 'candidate-based' evaluation is operated. Party recommendation, or *suisen*, is an official declaration of support from the party's central leadership to the candidate of other parties. In the single-member competitions, the recommendation itself is what comes closest to endorsement from parties other than its own. In other words, recommendation, like party labels, can become an important source of information among voters in making their voting decisions. At the same time, recommendation is a legal process which imposes legal constraints on both sides. For example, a candidate may ask the organization to host a policy hearing meeting for prospective supporters, and during the official election campaign period, the recommending organization may participate in election campaigns for the recommended candidate, such as by making phone calls. An official letter that acknowledges the organization's decision to 'recommend' a candidate may be let known to the supporters of both sides, even in between the official campaign periods.⁸² While any activity of the organization that issued an official 'recommendation letter' is subject to strict legal restraints, the value of recommendation as the source of information as well as official acknowledgement is

⁸¹ Interview with LDP HoR, March 6, 2017.

⁸² For details, refer to 自由民主党 (2008) 『総選挙実施の手引き』 18—22頁、「友好団体へのはたらきかけ」

quite high when it comes to the Kōmeitō supporters who show more coherent voting behaviors. Depending on whether the LDP candidate has received recommendation from the Kōmeitō, the degree to which Kōmeitō supporters in the district spend their resources in electoral campaign could largely differ. When the LDP candidate in the district has received nomination from the Kōmeitō, then the local Kōmeitō activists make explicit request to the Kōmeitō supporters to vote for the LDP candidate. Often, such pledges are made repetitively to individual supporters in order to consolidate the support for the endorsed LDP candidates.⁸³ In other words, whether an LDP candidate is able to (or chooses to) receive recommendation from the Kōmeitō leadership could bear significant consequences to not only his/her vote shares but also to the electoral strategies.

Similarly, the Kōmeitō also benefits from mutual recommendation system with the LDP. The nomination from the LDP becomes a catalyst that beckon conservative voters to their side:

Table III-1 Number of candidates and recommendations in general elections

	42nd 2000	43rd 2003	44th 2005	45th 2009	46th 2012	47th 2014
LDP #candidate	271	277	290	289	289	283
Recommendation from the Kōmeitō (%)	161 (59.4%)	199 (71.8%)	239 (82.4%)	272 (94.1%)	196 (67.8%)	258 (91.2%)
Kōmeitō #candidate	18	10	9	8	9	10
Recommendation from the LDP	14 (77.8%)	10 (100%)	9 (100%)	8 (100%)	9 (100%)	10 (100%)

Source: Kōmei Shinbum and Asahi Shinbum

⁸³ Interview with a staff at Sōka Gakkai staff on February 1, 2017

The reason why the Kōmeitō ask for LDP's recommendation for their candidates is that, for example, they can make a poster with a picture of Prime Minister next to their candidates, or if they can claim that their candidate has the official recommendation from the LDP, it would be easier for them to appeal to the conservative voters that their candidate shares their political interests.⁸⁴

In other words, the Kōmeitō candidates can enlarge the pool of supporters to non-Kōmeitō, conservative voters, by obtaining the official party label in the name of 'recommended by the LDP.'

While almost all Kōmeitō candidates running in single-member districts receive 'recommendation' from the LDP, as [Table III-1] shows, not all LDP candidates receive recommendation from the Kōmeitō. While the recommendation rates continued to increase from 2000 to 2009 elections, it showed a significant drop in 2012. Most of all, the fluctuations in the number of recommendations from the Kōmeitō to the LDP candidates occur because, even though the final recommendations are given by the central party leadership, the negotiations take place individually at the prefectural level. For LDP candidates who do not receive recommendation from the Kōmeitō, Kōmeitō takes on the policy of *jishu tōhyō*, or autonomous voting, where the party does not support unitary candidate and voting decisions are made autonomously among the Kōmeitō supporters. The above interviewee claimed that some LDP candidates choose not to receive recommendation from the Kōmeitō when their personal *kōenkai* do not necessarily get along with the Kōmeitō/Sōka Gakkai. He emphasizes that whether or not LDP candidates ask for recommendation from the Kōmeitō is entirely up to individuals. Some candidates never ask the Kōmeitō for recommendation, including Hirasawa Katsuei (Tokyo 17), Koizumi Junichiro and his successor Koizumi Shinjiro (Kanagawa 11) Aso Taro (Fukuoka 8, except for 2005), as well as candidates from Osaka 11 (Tsuboi Ichio, Iwaki Nobuko, Sato Yukari) and Fukuoka 1. While Hirasawa, Koizumi, and Aso are all veteran politicians with strong personal support bases, it is not necessarily the strength of one's support base that determines whether or not s/he asks for Kōmeitō's recommendation. Considering that a great number of LDP representatives with strong support bases still do receive recommendations from the Kōmeitō, it is the 'local

⁸⁴ Interview with a Lower House LDP representative on March 3, 2017

personal relations,’ rather than the simple balance of power, that seem to mediate electoral cooperation between the two parties at the district level.

One of critical aspects of the recommendation system is that it is characterized by reciprocity. Because of these merits that derive from the recommendation system, it often functions as party’s resources in negotiating the allocation of electoral resources in terms of both candidate endorsement and votes. Because the recommendation from the Kōmeitō alone assures the vote increase, the individual LDP candidates, as well as the party leadership, are inclined to repay the favor by offering some of their electoral resources in return. There are various ways for the LDP to provide compensation to the Kōmeitō’s: Appealing to their own *kōenkai* members to vote for the Kōmeitō in PR; providing nomination to Kōmeitō candidates who are running in SMD in the same prefecture; agreeing on endorsement arrangement to concede a single-member district in the next general election (Costa Rican arrangement); promising to nominate a Kōmeitō candidate in the prospective UH elections, etc.

The institutionalization of ‘candidate-based evaluation’ system was mediated by two important organs established by Sōka Gakkai and the Kōmeitō. First, before the 1995 local election, *shakai kyōgikai* was established within Sōka Gakkai as an organ to discuss the measures for national and local elections. Essentially, *shakai kyōgikai* today is set up to evaluate potential candidates—both Kōmeitō and LDP—in each polity level before elections. While *Shakai kyōgikai*, held in prefectural, regional (*hōmen*) and central levels, is set up by the Sōka Gakkai prior to relevant elections, liaison meeting, or so-called *renraku kyōgikai*, is held regularly on every Thursday in order to facilitate ‘communication’ between Sōka Gakkai and the Kōmeitō. It is through this *renraku kyōgikai* Kōmeitō makes official request to Sōka Gakkai to support certain candidates, who would be deliberated in *shakai kyōgikai*. The final decision on whether to approve the recommendation of LDP candidates is made at *renraku kyōgikai*, where the Sōka Gakkai and the Kōmeitō discuss the quality of every LDP candidate who ask for the organizations’ recommendation. More importantly, the recommendation system, and the LDP candidates’ incorporation of Kōmeitō organization through it, highlights the flexible nature of their personal support organizations. That LDP candidates are evaluated on

individual basis means that the LDP candidates construct their own electoral strategy based on his/her calculations, rather than relying on the centralized mobilization of party support.

ii. Timed Adaptation: Prefectural-Level Evaluations of Candidates

Along with whether or not LDP candidates have recommendations from the Kōmeitō, the timing at which the recommendation is given is equally important: Not all LDP candidates receive recommendations at the same time. Typically, the Kōmeitō carries out candidate evaluation processes across multiple occasions, and the distribution of recommendations takes place after each *renraku kyōgikai* between Kōmeitō and Sōka Gakkai held every Thursday. Below table shows the distributions of the number of recommendations given from the Kōmeitō to LDP candidates before the 2009 general election held on August 30 ([Table III-2]). While the LDP issued recommendations to all eight Kōmeitō candidates on the day of the dissolution of the Lower House (July 21), the earliest issuance of recommendations from the Kōmeitō to the LDP candidates occurred on July 30, when the Kōmeitō announced the recommendations of ninety-two LDP candidates. Afterwards, Kōmeitō held weekly *renraku kyōgikai* at central level, where the party leadership discussed the issuance of recommendations to the remaining LDP candidates collectively. Needless to say, the sooner and LDP candidate receive recommendation from the Kōmeitō the better in terms of electoral mobilization, because

Table III-2 Date and Number of Recommendations before the 2009 General Election (Kōmeitō→ LDP)

	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th	TOTAL
Date	July 30	Aug. 6	Aug. 13	Aug. 17	Aug. 20	Aug. 24	
#Recommendation	92	128	44	6	1	1	272

Source: Kōmei Shimbun

the issuing of recommendation is itself the same as letting the Kōmeitō voters know the party is supporting the LDP candidate in their district.

The question, then, is why the timing of issuance of recommendations differ among candidates. One reason for the extended evaluation period has something to do with the number of candidates Kōmeitō must evaluate; unlike LDP who only needs to evaluate only less than ten candidates, Kōmeitō must deal with nearly 280 in every election. Another reason has a lot to do with the evaluation process within the Kōmeitō organization. Simply put, the timings of the issuance of recommendations differ because the evaluation process essentially takes place at the prefectural level, where inter-party negotiations, both official and unofficial, are carried out among local party leaders. One Kōmeitō staff explained:

There are several reasons why the timings of the issuance of recommendations differ. One is when the LDP candidates are first-time runners. In this case, we have no idea what kind of person this candidate is, so the process can take time. Another reason has a lot to do with local context. It is a problem of ‘balance’ in each district, and the LDP and Kōmeitō must discuss the possibility of cooperation or negotiate the give-and-take.⁸⁵

In other words, whether or not an LDP candidate can incorporate Kōmeitō supporters depends largely on the local weather of the two-party relations.

Such local-oriented decision-making process functions as a mechanism to minimize the risk of over-supporting as well as to incorporate local demands in the executions of electoral cooperation. First, individual LDP candidates file the request for recommendation to the respective LDP prefectural headquarters (*kenren*), which are delivered collectively to the Kōmeitō counterpart in each prefecture. Here, Kōmeitō’s prefectural executive board (*kenkanjikai*) carries out deliberation of individual LDP candidates, and decides whether to recommend them to the party’s central executive board (*chūōkanjikai*). Once the list is submitted by the prefectural executive board, the central executive board finalizes the decision and inform the LDP executive council at the central headquarter, and the decisions are also delivered at the prefectural levels

⁸⁵ Interview with a Kōmeitō headquarter staff on April 28, 2017

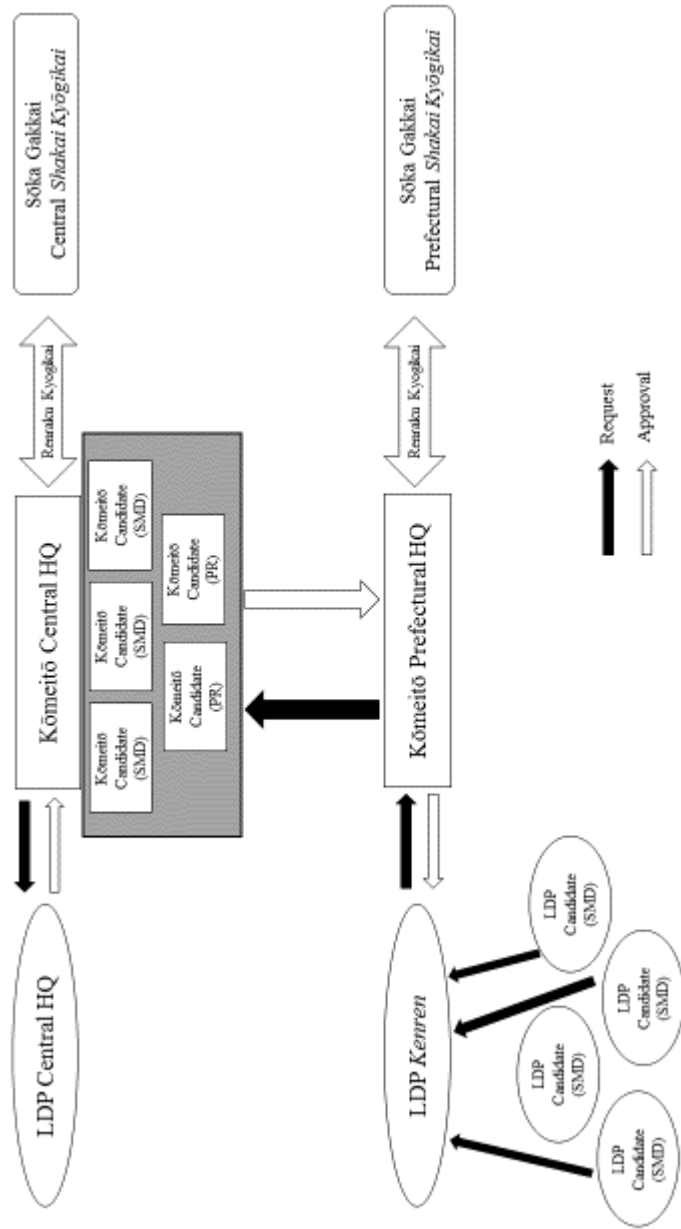


Figure III-2 Candidate Evaluation Process

first-hand evaluation of the LDP candidates, it is rarely the case where the Kōmeitō actually refuse to cooperate. Once listed on the prefectural headquarters' list of recommendations, the central leadership rarely reject them; in most cases, some rejecting mechanism intervenes even before the LDP candidates file the petition to the Kōmeitō's prefectural headquarter.⁸⁶ Instead, the deterring mechanism functions in the way the Kōmeitō delays the prefectural-level 'deliberation' procedure until some conditions are met. For example, in the 2003 general election, the Kōmeitō put off the issuances of recommendations to two LDP candidates who were running in Okinawa, until the LDP agreed not to field its own candidate in District Okinawa 1 and support Kōmeitō's Shiraho Taichi as joint candidate instead.⁸⁷ In other words, the Kōmeitō is able to control the outflow of its electoral resources by controlling the timing of recommendation.

Such 'downward delegation' of evaluation process within the Kōmeitō runs contrary to LDP's evaluation of Kōmeitō candidates. Kōmeitō's district candidates are evaluated collectively by the LDP's central leadership, and the issuance of recommendations usually take place on the day of Lower House dissolution. At the same time, as the cooperation deepened and coalition alliance prolonged, such procedures have become mere formality; once Kōmeitō's prefectural headquarters decide to recommend LDP candidates, the central office rarely defies the decision. Yet this procedure that must go through prefectural headquarters is significant in that the inter-party negotiations regarding electoral cooperation, from candidate endorsement to recommendation, take place on prefectural level during LH elections. And there are varieties of means through which the two parties negotiate the allocation of resources. It ranges from the technical demands such as the number of occasions provided for the Kōmeitō to make appearance at the LDP's local gathering, or request for campaign speech from prominent LDP representatives, to the endorsement coordination for future Lower and Upper elections.

While the fact that the inter-party negotiation regarding the recommendation takes

⁸⁶ One interviewee told me that, when the Kōmeitō supporters are clear about not wanting to support certain LDP candidate, then some brakes would be put on in order to prevent the candidate's name to be included in the list (Interview with a Kōmeitō headquarter staff on April 28, 2017).

⁸⁷ 公明新聞2003. 10. 18 1頁

place at the prefectural level is critical aspect of the inter-party negotiation, it does not diminish the ‘centralized’ control over the inter-party relations either. In other words, it is the central leadership that accommodates overall checks-and-balances in terms of party’s resource allocation. The reason why local leadership is given marginal autonomy in their decision-makings seems to lay in the central leadership’s incentive to accommodate local demands, which often become critical in the effective implementation of electoral cooperation. In a way, such downward delegation of local-level negotiation procedure can be characterized as what Eldersveld (1964) called “reciprocal deference structure”:

[T]he desperate need in all parties for votes, which are scarcely mobilized at the apex of the hierarchy, results in at least some, if not pronounced, deference to the local structural strata where votes are won or lost. Thus, a kind of “balkanization” of power relations occurs, with variations in the extent of autonomy in middle and lower hierarchical strata from one habitat to the next. While admittedly party systems in different countries will vary in degree of stratararchy, exploratory research suggests the real possibility that there is a stratararchical element in all such systems, despite the custom of referring to them in such simple terms as “centralized,” monolithic, or unitary.⁸⁸

He argues that distribution of power within a party, no matter how oligarchic it may seem, does not follow a simple hierarchical order, but instead it is characterized by ‘reciprocal deference structure.’ The diversities of membership and local tradition as well as ‘milieus of opinions’ often deprive the party leadership from imposing centralized control, and the ‘absence of effective sanctions’ provide incentives for the central leadership to tolerate local autonomy and initiative. According to him, this tolerance essentially “rests on mutual perspectives concerning the strategy of electoral success, or mutual tolerance of ineptness in the face of sure defeat” (10).

Put differently, the diversity of local logics that generates divergent ways of executing electoral cooperation must not be confused with the lack of centralized coordination between the two parties’ central leadership. As it will be explored in later chapters, while the local logics operate underneath the diverse ways in which the electoral alliance embodies itself during elections, it is nonetheless the accuracy of vote allocations and centralized coordination of electoral resources that allow the LDP-

⁸⁸ Eldersveld (1964) pp.9

Kōmeitō electoral alliance to function most effectively.

3) Scaled Mobilization at District Level

i. Resilience of Personal Vote Cultivation

In many occasions Gakkai takes on *jishu tōhyō* even when Kōmei gives *suisen* or support. Even when Gakkai takes on *jishu tōhyō* policy, its attitudes can differ election by election.

In some cases, they would leave everything up to Kōmei; they would just let their supporters know about the fact that the Kōmei have given *suisen* or support; Kōmei politicians make appearance at Gakkai meeting and request support; or the Kōmeitō engages in active support by mobilizing resources even from outside their districts... (In other words) there are different degrees of ‘support’ [from Sōka Gakkai].⁸⁹

How, then, are the supporters mobilized after the ‘recommendation’ becomes official? As discussed in the previous chapter, the Sōka Gakkai created *shakai kyōgikai*, or Society Council, shortly before the official formation of the New Frontier Party in order to prioritize vote allocations for Kōmeitō politicians and deter non-Kōmeitō candidates from making claims on their electoral resources. It was, in a sense, a way to minimize the risk of eroding its established resources while maximizing their electoral interests. Such mechanism of risk-aversion survived, and made its way to be reinstituted in the execution of electoral cooperation with the LDP after 1999. At the same time, the institutionalization of electoral cooperation between the two parties were staged within the reconstruction process of each of the LDP candidates’ personal support organization under the new electoral rules. In that process, the highly party-centered vote allocation of the Kōmeitō became incorporated into the personal support base of each LDP candidate, which essentially remained as the “personal” electoral resources of their own.

The Kōmeitō’s principle of ‘candidate-based’ evaluation first adopted in the 1995 general local election, which was passed down to the two-party cooperation after 1999, in a way became the means to allow the incorporation of Kōmeitō’s electoral resources into personal support base of each LDP candidate. One Sōka Gakkai member asserted that the principle of candidate-based mobilization was implemented in order to assuage hostility against the LDP, which was quite common among the members of Sōka Gakkai,

⁸⁹ 朝日新聞アエラ編集部(2000)『創価学会解剖』154頁

and minimize the risk of over-supporting its candidates:

I think, when it came to supporting LDP candidates, the principle of candidate-based support has been maintained because we used to be pretty hostile toward one another in the past. Moreover, we learned from the bitter experience of NFP and wanted to be careful by discerning the individual's quality as a candidate.⁹⁰

The Kōmeitō's emphasis on the 'quality of the candidate' implies that the incorporation of Kōmeitō support depends largely on the local relationship between individual LDP candidate and the respective Kōmeitō voters. In other words, it is not the party label but the 'personal connection' that counts. It is possible to argue that, for the LDP candidates, their local Kōmeitō resources are a kind of intermediary organization. Park (1998) argues that "the reality was that candidates intensified, not decreased, their reliance on intermediary organizations. Candidates continued to perceive intermediary organizations as an effective building block in mobilizing political support" (236). Simply speaking, the incorporation of Kōmeitō votes into one's personal support base occurs as a part of constructing one's personal support organization, illuminating the 'inclusive' and 'flexible' nature of LDP's personal *kōenkai* organizations.

At the same time, the new electoral rules changed the nature of vote mobilization for Kōmeitō candidates running in districts. Unlike in the past when the party was known for strictly 'party-based' mobilization of support, it became increasingly necessary for Kōmeitō's district candidates to extend the pool of supporters. In doing so, 'recommendation' functioned as a key to open the door for 'conservative camp,' which used to be kept shut for the Kōmeitō candidates. One Kōmeitō representative who are 'recommended' by the LDP expressed how the method of his vote cultivation is becoming increasingly dispersed and decentralized:

I meet the local people on a daily basis. ... During election campaign, I attend to meetings set up by the support organization. What is important is how I behave on everyday occasions, and I regularly attend LDP's *chōnaikai* meetings in order to construct good relationship. ... But it is also true that there are less LDP representatives with strong personal *kōenkai*. I think *kōenkai* themselves are getting weaker everywhere, which means it is becoming less likely that I can expect a large sum of votes from a single organization. That is why I go to as many local gatherings

⁹⁰ Interview with a professor of Soka University, January 17, 2017

as possible and pay attention to what is happening in my district.⁹¹

He went on to add that he hardly attends to the events hosted by the Kōmeitō, because the Kōmeitō already has an established organization to support him. In other words, Kōmeitō candidates running in single-member districts are essentially forced to abandon exclusivity of personal support and extend flexibility in terms of supporter mobilization.⁹² The reason for this change of preference is clear: Kōmeitō support is not enough to get him elected in the single-member competition, and he needs other voters to vote for him. As the election threshold went up after the introduction of the new electoral system, a candidate's reliance on the intermediary groups also heightened, unlike the presumption that the single-member district system would alleviate collusion between local interest/intermediary groups and politicians.

ii. Urban-Intensive Concentration of Kōmeitō Support

There are different levels of 'electoral cooperation' for the Kōmeitō. When the LDP candidate has strong support base and the Kōmeitō's support does not necessarily determine the result, then the candidate may invite the Kōmeitō to speak at his personal gathering and let him appeal to his supporters to vote for the Kōmeitō in PR. When the LDP candidate is overwhelmingly strong in that district, that is pretty much as far as it goes. ...

On the other hand, in districts where LDP candidate is not so strong, and Kōmeitō's votes, for example about 20,000 votes, could determine his election in that district, then Kōmeitō's demand often expands. Not only they would be invited to kōenkai gatherings, but LDP candidate would deliver campaign speech for the Kōmeitō, or in the most extreme case, he would make an appeal to the public himself to encourage people to vote for the Kōmeitō in PR.⁹³

When the key for sustainable party alliance is the successful electoral alliance, the consistency, as much as its scale, of vote mobilization becomes critical. The accuracy of Kōmeitō's vote as well as candidate allocations in both national and local elections has been pointed out perhaps as the most significant aspect of this unique political party. Put simply, two characteristics define Kōmeitō electoral basis: urban-intensiveness and accurate allocation of votes and candidates that are founded upon its support base, Sōka

⁹¹ Interview with a Kōmeitō HoR member, December 7, 2016

⁹² Park (1998) pointed out that the two features of LDP member's kōenkai is 'deliberate inclusivity' and 'flexibility of coordination' (271-272).,

⁹³ Interview with LDP HoR on March 6, 2017.

Gakkai. Succeeding the Kōmei political league (1961-1964), the Kōmeitō was established in 1964 as a political branch of Nichiren Sōshū-derived Buddhist organization, Sōka Gakkai. Conventionally, critics have viewed Kōmeitō synonymously with Sōka Gakkai, in terms of membership and political proclivity. The high level of organizational integrity was associated with close personal relationships among fellow believers as well as refined networks that bind the members with both vertical (top-down mentorship) and horizontal (residential area) ties. According to Nishijima (1968), Sōka Gakkai began putting emphasis on strengthening the horizontal (regional) assemblies—often called the ‘block system’—starting in 1955, shortly after the Culture Bureau (*bunkabu*) was established within Sōka Gakkai and ran the very first candidates in local election. The implication here is that Sōka Gakkai reconfigured organizational system for election campaign, in order to supplement the increasing needs to coach the local leaders and “enhance solidarity among members according to the areas of their residencies” (64-68). Murakami (1969) also argues that the reason why the block system was introduced to Sōka Gakkai organization in May 1955 had much to do with the experience of the first election held a month earlier:

... After going through first local election in April 1955, [Sōka Gakkai] implemented block system in following May, which started out in Tokyo then disseminated to all regions of Japan. The block system is, as it is often called, the horizontal line within certain area, yet this line is drawn in accordance with electoral districts, and this was de facto party organization for the mobilization of support. ... As [Sōka Gakkai] made their advancement into politics, the horizontal block system was enhanced, and each block began holding *zadankai* of their own. Further, the block system was also applied to both male and female Youth Divisions as well as Women’s Division in order to bring about an organizational form that works most effectively for electoral strategies (129-131).

He goes on to argue that the Kōmeitō is a “political party without legs,” pointing to the fact that, while the party appears to have set up concrete top-down organizational system, in reality the local activists are Sōka Gakkai members, who are themselves not even sure whether they hold Kōmeitō’s party membership. Therefore, the distinction between Kōmeitō party members and Sōka Gakkai members is not only impossible but also the question itself is irrelevant (119-121).

It is no secret that the Kōmeitō has expanded its political ground along with the

membership of its power base, Sōka Gakkai, throughout the postwar period (Hori 1973). The demography of this religious organization as well as the Kōmeitō concentrated in metropolitan cities, reflecting the development of Sōka Gakkai membership that consisted of industrial labors who poured into the urban cities from rural areas during the period of high economic growth (Suzuki 1963, 1964; Shimada 2007: 80). The characteristics of the Kōmeitō support base remains largely the same today. The source of Kōmeitō votes is concentrated in highly populated prefectures, which include so-called government-designated cities (*seirei shitei toshi*). During nationwide local elections, the Kōmeitō earns about 75% of total votes in ten prefectures that are highly populated—Tokyo, Osaka, Kanagawa, Aichi, Hokkaido, Saitama, Hyogo, Fukuoka, Chiba, and Kyoto—and these ten prefectures alone represent almost half of single-member districts during general election. Fundamentally, the LDP's determination to win over cooperation from the Kōmeitō was motivated by the very fact that the Kōmeitō possesses significant number of loyal supporters in the very regions where LDP is most vulnerable. Put simply, in light of new electoral environment, the LDP's strategy to compensate its shortcoming was to rely on the highly 'urban' support base of the Kōmeitō (Rosenbluth and Yamada 2015).

Before discussing the 'urban-intensive' nature of the Kōmeitō's supporter demography in detail, let us take a look at the overall electoral strength of the Kōmeitō on three levels of politics. In recent publications, the estimated number of Kōmeitō supporters ranges from 7,000,000 to 9,000,000. Such estimation comes from party's vote gains in national elections, shown in [Table III-3] and [Table III-4], under the LDP-Kōmeitō coalition government. Kōmeitō has mobilized as many as 9 million votes in the 2005 Lower House election. The lowest vote count, on the other hand, was recorded in 2012, with about 7 million votes in PR. The Kōmeitō's vote share is relatively stable, ranging between 13% and 16% in the Upper House elections. The Kōmeitō's vote gains in the Upper House elections reached its peak in 2004, yet with the declining popularity of the LDP in the post-Koizumi era, the Kōmeitō also suffered the consequences. While

Table III-3 Komeito's vote counts in Upper House Elections (PR)

	VOTE COUNT	SHARE (%)
19TH (2001)	8,187,805	14.96
20TH (2004)	8,621,265	15.41
21TH (2007)	7,765,328	13.2
22TH (2010)	7,639,433	13.07
23TH (2013)	7,568,082	14.22
24TH (2016)	7,572,960	13.52

Table III-4 Komeito's vote counts in Lower House elections (PR)

	VOTE COUNT	SHARE (%)
42ND (2000)	7,762,032	12.97
43RD (2003)	8,733,444	14.78
44TH (2005)	8,987,620	13.26
45TH (2009)	8,054,077	11.45
46TH (2012)	7,116,474	11.83
47TH (2014)	7,314,236	13.71

the LDP has been recovering its popularity after 2012, however, the Kōmeitō has not entirely bounced back. On the other hand, in the Lower House elections, Kōmeitō's vote gains are relatively volatile, ranging from 7 million (2012) to 9 million (2005). Because of the explicit electoral cooperation that takes place during the Lower House elections, the Kōmeitō's vote gains are more responsive to the popularity of its coalition partner, the LDP. The Kōmeitō's vote gains hit the record of 9 million in the postal election in 2005, yet in the following 2009 election its vote share hit the lowest since the inauguration of the coalition government. Even in 2012, in which the LDP and the Kōmeitō won a 'landslide victory,' the Kōmeitō lost significant number of votes. The lower turnout rate as well as the increasing number of opposition parties after the end of the DPJ regime in 2009 may be some of the reasons why the party votes in PR were scattered among parties. At the same time, the decline of PR votes in recent Lower House elections poses the question on the efficacy of vote bartering with the LDP, with which the Kōmeitō expects increase in party votes.

In order to assess the value of Kōmeitō's electoral basis, on the other hand, it is necessary to evaluate the party's supporter mobilization in the local elections. [Table III-5] shows the votes gains by the LDP, Kōmeitō and the Japan Communist Party (JCP) in general local election held in 2003. While the LDP's vote share in the prefectural assembly elections is much higher than small parties, the competitiveness of the Kōmeitō (as well as the JCP) radically increases in government-designated cities as well as in Tokyo Special District assembly elections. Further, LDP and the Kōmeitō show distinct pattern of supporter mobilizations; between prefectural assembly and city assembly elections (government-designated cities and general cities), Kōmeitō's vote gain increases by 29%, while that of LDP's decrease by 73%. Put differently, the LDP mobilizes only 27% of the prefecture-level support in the city assembly elections.⁹⁴ One of the reasons for the 'absence' of the LDP in the lower strata of politics is that most city/town assembly members run as independents.⁹⁵ At the same time, such distribution

⁹⁴ Since Tokyo prefectural assembly election is not held during general local elections,

⁹⁵ In 2003, 78% of elected city/town assembly members run as independents.

Table III-5 Vote Gains (Share %) of General Elections in 2003 by Party

	LDP		Kōmeitō		JCP	
Prefectural assembly	14,463,993	38.9%	2,995,330	8.1%	3,207,065	8.6%
Government-designated city assembly	1,970,821	21.0%	1,267,146	18.1%	881,065	12.6%
General city assembly	1,863,638	9.4%	2,593,029	13.0%	1,695,602	8.5%
Tokyo Special District	739,299	30.3%	496,369	20.3%	325,004	13.3%
Town assembly	31,742	5.0%	292,546	4.9%	324,992	5.5%

Table III-6 Election Rates in Local General Election (Source: Election Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications)

	LDP	KŌMEITŌ	INDEPENDENT
Y1971	80.20%	98.40%	79.10%
Y1975	86.30%	94.30%	81.10%
Y1979	88.00%	97.60%	92.40%
Y1983	89.60%	98.80%	88.00%
Y1987	86.90%	99.80%	88.40%
Y1991	93.60%	99.80%	90.00%
Y1995	92.20%	99.90%	88.80%
Y1999	90.90%	99.80%	85.80%
Y2003	90.50%	100%	87.20%
Y2007	85.70%	99.90%	78.10%
Y2011	91.00%	99.90%	80.70%

of votes in the different level of politics elucidates the institutional constraints imposed upon Kōmeitō. In prefectural assembly elections, the Kōmeitō is unable to fully mobilize its electoral resources because of the limited number of quota and higher election threshold.⁹⁶ It also means that, in order to assess the true strength of the Kōmeitō's support bases, it is necessary to highlight its vote collecting capabilities in the municipal levels, where its full-scale support demography becomes visible.

Another reason for the Kōmeitō's lower vote gains in prefectural assembly election is related to the party's strategy in candidate allocation. The primary goal of the Kōmeitō and its avid supporters during election is not necessarily to increase vote gains or share of seats in the assembly, but the emphasis is laid upon the elections of *all* endorsed candidates. Put simply, Kōmeitō fields its candidates only when the party is fairly certain that they can win. This principle runs through all levels of strata, from town/city assembly to national election. Needless to say, such fielding strategy requires highly accurate estimate of the demography of party supporters—how many supporters reside in which electoral district. As the nearly perfect election rates over the past local general elections show ([Table III-6]), the Kōmeitō has acquired most efficient electoral strategy—information on the precise size and location of its supporters—which is the most critical aspect of the Kōmeitō's electoral strength.

Another critical aspect of the Kōmeitō's electoral strength lies in the highly-concentrated distribution of supporters. [Table III-7] elucidates this point. It shows the vote counts and the number of seats earned by the Kōmeitō and JCP under the old electoral system between 1976 and 1986. While the vote counts of the two parties do not largely differ throughout the five elections, the JCP earns much less number of seats in the Lower House. In 1979, the JCP earned more votes than the Kōmeitō, but it received only 39 seats as opposed to Kōmeitō's 57. Such representation failure may have had something to do with the flaws in electoral system, but at the same time it highlights the efficacy of the Kōmeitō's electoral strategy, especially in comparison with that of JCP's,

⁹⁶ In 2003, 2634 prefectural assemblymen were elected from 44 prefectures, while the quota for city assemblymen was more than 10,000.

Table III-7 Vote Counts and Seat Shares of Kōmeitō and JCP in General Elections

	Kōmeitō		JCP	
	Vote Counts	#Seats	Vote Counts	#Seats
1976	6,177,300	55	5,878,192	17
1979	5,282,683	57	5,625,528	39
1980	5,329,942	33	5,803,613	29
1983	5,745,751	58	5,302,485	26
1986	5,701,278	56	5,313,246	26
Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication				

Table III-8 Kōmeitō's Vote Shares in Municipal Elections by Prefecture (1999 & 2003)

	1999			2003		
	Prefecture	Vote Share	Vote Counts	Prefecture	Vote Share	Vote Counts
1	Osaka	21.3%	562,065	Osaka	23.5%	560,432
2	Tokyo	18.0%	667,946	Tokyo	20.2%	708,286
3	Hyogo	15.1%	223,493	Hyogo	16.7%	247,471
4	Kanagawa	14.9%	407,243	Kanagawa	15.9%	455,102
5	Kyoto	13.8%	106,281	Saitama	15.3%	278,986
6	Kochi	13.6%	24,949	Kyoto	15.2%	96,138
7	Wakayama	13.3%	45,893	Chiba	14.6%	179,901
8	Saitama	12.8%	221,825	Wakayama	14.5%	46,233
9	Fukuoka	12.3%	181,691	Fukuoka	13.7%	199,070
10	Chiba	12.2%	165,196	Kochi	13.6%	24,103

whose primary objective in elections—somewhat antithetically to Kōmeitō—was to field its own candidate in every electoral district.

The question, then, is where Kōmeitō supporters are most concentrated. [Table III-8 shows the highest prefectural vote share of the Kōmeitō in municipal-level elections held during the general local elections in 1999 and 2003.⁹⁷ In these two elections, Kōmeitō's vote share is highest in Osaka, Tokyo, Hyogo, and Kanagawa, four of the highly populated prefectures where Kōmeitō fields its own candidates in district during Lower House elections. Considering that most municipal-level districts have large number of district magnitude and the 'electoral cooperation' rarely takes place among parties or candidates, such numbers can be interpreted as the raw indicators of the Kōmeitō's local strength. As it will be explored in details later, the Kōmeitō's prefecture-level vote shares in national elections tend to show differing patterns of vote distribution across prefectures, and such deviation can be used to measure the degree of vote mobilization between the two parties.

Despite its urban strength, on the other hand, Kōmeitō's support base has its limitations. First of all, Kōmeitō is not able to mobilize enough votes to elect its own candidates in single-member districts—both on national and local levels—even in the areas where its support base is most concentrated. As it will be shown in later chapters, elections of Kōmeitō candidates in single-member districts are possible because of the pre-electoral coordination with other parties. Put another way, without pre-electoral coordination, it is unlikely that the Kōmeitō candidates are able to get elected in any district. Secondly, the limitation of Kōmeitō's electoral strategy is embedded in its incapacity to expand its support base. On average, the Kōmeitō mobilizes about seven to eight million votes during national elections, yet this number does not go up even when the LDP enjoys large expansion of votes. In the last seven general elections held between 2000 and 2017, Kōmeitō's seat gains in the PR ranged between 21 (2009 and 2017) and 26 (2015), while the number of single-member districts is limited to eight to nine seats. In other words, the Kōmeitō's party strength in the Lower House remains about 30 seats,

⁹⁷ Municipal-level elections include: government-designated city assemblies, general city assemblies, Tokyo Special District assemblies, and town assemblies.

and there are no real prospects for the number to expand. While such seat share can be critical if Japan's party system was characterized by close two-party competition, recent opposition fragmentation that generates LDP's predominance in the Diet may devalue the position of the Kōmeitō in the Diet. In other words, Kōmeitō's organizational value is overly concentrated in the electoral alliance—rather than the parliamentary one—and such election-biased coalition may become the cause of imbalance between the two parties' calculations of interests.

Further, such power balance not only functions as the critical catalyst in inducing inter-party cooperation, but it can also become the source of tension between the two coalition partners. Because of the relatively high leverage Kōmeitō possesses in the urban districts, the party's demand vis-à-vis its coalition partner can also expand. As one LDP representative put it:

In districts where LDP candidates are weak, in other words whose elections depend on the Kōmeitō votes, Kōmeitō tend to demand more from the LDP. ... Electoral cooperation can be difficult in regions such as Tokyo, Osaka, Kanagawa, and Hyogo, where Kōmeitō also runs its candidates in the districts during LH elections. In other words, in regions where LDP is strong, the cooperation with the Kōmeitō often goes smoothly, while in districts or prefectures where LDP is weak, difficulties can arise.⁹⁸

It implies that, despite the conventional understanding of the Kōmeitō organization as monolithic and centralized, the ways in which the electoral cooperation takes place between the LDP and the Kōmeitō can vary depending on the local balance of power. A few studies have shown the discords between the LDP and the Kōmeitō during national elections. Cox (2003), for example, illustrates how the local Kōmeitō continued to align with non-LDP five-party alliance in the newly formed SMDs in Hyogo during the 2000 general election, despite the official request from the national party leadership to support the LDP candidate as coalition partner. Umawatari (2013), analyzing the endorsement process of the LDP in Aomori prefecture in 2009, shows that the local Kōmeitō branch defied the candidate who received official endorsement from the LDP headquarters, and instead gave official support to an independent candidate endorsed by local LDP office. Observing the divergence of election campaigning across districts by the Soka Gakkai

⁹⁸ Interview with an LDP HoR representative on March 6, 2017

supporters during the 2010 UH election, Ehrhardt (2014) suggests that such diversities indicated “a more decentralized party organization than the monolithic entity that appears in the contemporary literature” (126). In other words, it is necessary to recognize the variations of electoral cooperation between the LDP and the Kōmeitō in order to elucidate the dynamics of what is seemingly a monolithic and centralized electoral alliance.

iii. Kōmeitō’s Reward

Let us now turn to the question of what Kōmeitō’s share of the benefits it receives from the LDP in return in terms of electoral cooperation. As expressed in the phrase, “*hirei ha Kōmei*,” the electoral reward for the Kōmeitō comes from the increase in vote gains in proportional representation tier. In the 1998 Upper House election, the last national election held before the launching of the LDP-Kōmeitō electoral alliance, Kōmeitō mobilized 7,748,301 votes nationwide.⁹⁹ Assuming that the number represents the pure Kōmeitō support, then, in the 2000 general election, in which the Kōmeitō earned 7,762,032 votes in PR, seemed to have gained virtually no help from the LDP. Yet in 2003, the Kōmeitō’s vote gains in PR drastically increased by 12.5%, earning 8,733,444 votes. Such sharp increase, as well as the fact that the Kōmeitō had never earned more than eight million votes in any national election, suggests that the LDP’s ‘contribution’ to the Kōmeitō began to show in 2003, and invited a breakthrough in

Table III-9 Kōmeitō’s vote gains in 2003 in major cities (PR and ward/city assembly)

	PR (A)	WA/CA (B)	Diff. (A-B)	Diff.(%)
Tokyo (23 wards)	545,723	558,319	-12,596	-2.26
Osaka	279,695	266,849	12,846	4.81
Yokohama	205,818	193,928	11,890	6.13
Kawasaki	80,661	93,069	-12,408	-13.33
Kobe	106,726	111,513	-4,787	-4.29
Total	1,218,623	1,223,678	-5055	-0.41

⁹⁹ 平成22年7月11日執行参議院議員通常選挙結果調、21頁

Kōmeitō's overall vote gains.

Estimating the number of Kōmeitō supporters in each district is not an easy task. While some calculate the district average by dividing the party's PR vote gain in the same election by 300 (number of single-member districts), such estimation can be highly inaccurate given the highly urban-biased demography of the Kōmeitō supporters. Others, such as the one method used in Kabashima (2014)'s analysis, estimate the number of Kōmeitō supporters based on the party's PR vote gain in each corresponding district, assuming that the PR vote represents the 'party vote.' This study also assume the number of 'pure Kōmeitō votes' casted in the national election in each district equal to the party's vote gains in PR, based on the observation that the Kōmeitō's vote gains during the municipal elections in the large cities do not significantly differ from the ones in national election ([Table III-9]). In other words, at least in these urban cities, vote mobilization from the LDP to the Kōmeitō in PR does not take place to a significant degree.

In order to show where Kōmeitō gains help from its alliance partner, then, [Table III-10] compared the increase in Kōmeitō vote share between 2000 and 2003 by prefecture. On average, the Kōmeitō's vote gains in PR increased by about 20,000 votes (1.81% in vote share) in each prefecture. As the result shows, the gaps in the scale of increase differ largely across prefectures. Miyazaki prefecture showed the largest increase of 4.81%, while the smallest increase was recorded in Fukui at 0.35%, which was the only prefecture where Kōmeitō's PR vote gains decreased in absolute number. Interestingly enough, in terms of increases in vote share, the Kōmeitō receives more reward in the PR tier from less populated prefectures than in the prefectures that host government-designated cities (shown in dark rectangles). Put differently, the LDP's 'contributions' to its coalition partner in PR become more visible in suburban and rural prefectures, rather than in the urban regions where LDP gains the most.

In other words, the 'exchanges' of votes do not necessarily take place in the urban regions, but instead the Kōmeitō's vote gains are likely to come from rural or suburban regions. As [Table III-9] above shows, the Kōmeitō did not necessarily receive 'help' from the LDP in those regions where it has the largest concentrations of supporters. Assuming that the Kōmeitō's vote gains in municipal (city/ward assembly) elections

Table III-10 Komeito's Increase in Vote Share (%) and Counts in PR between 2000 and 2003

1	Miyazaki	4.81%	23,680	24	Shiga	1.80%	9,841
2	Kochi	4.74%	1,546	25	Okinawa	1.79%	12,471
3	Yamagata	4.27%	27,119	26	Aichi	1.78%	62,992
4	Ehime	3.90%	21,974	27	Fukushima	1.74%	15,894
5	Mie	3.71%	35,944	28	Kagawa	1.65%	2,867
6	Kagoshima	3.66%	27,702	29	Osaka	1.61%	64,683
7	Shizuoka	3.52%	64,649	30	Saga	1.57%	4,172
8	Tottori	3.46%	7,272	31	Tochigi	1.54%	14,991
9	Fukuoka	2.99%	63,036	32	Tokushima	1.36%	2,982
10	Gunma	2.63%	17,284	33	Kumamoto	1.36%	14,502
11	Shimane	2.62%	7,140	34	Tokyo	1.28%	79,437
12	Nagasaki	2.44%	11,709	35	Wakayama	1.28%	174
13	Aomori	2.39%	13,456	36	Yamanashi	1.21%	3,348
14	Okayama	2.38%	16,665	37	Hokkaido	1.18%	26,645
15	Ishikawa	2.35%	12,489	38	Kyoto	1.15%	10,487
16	Hiroshima	2.33%	25,410	39	Nagano	1.02%	9,982
17	Toyama	2.32%	9,417	40	Hyogo	1.01%	31,031
18	Gifu	2.28%	20,518	41	Niigata	1.01%	5,433
19	Ibaragi	2.09%	21,070	42	Kanagawa	0.96%	41,571
20	Akita	1.97%	9,180	43	Saitama	0.91%	11,021
21	Miyagi	1.92%	22,359	44	Nara	0.57%	5,033
22	Yamaguchi	1.91%	13,221	45	Iwate	0.42%	2,933
23	Chiba	1.88%	53,395	46	Oita	0.36%	641
	Average	1.81%	20,668	47	Fukui	0.35%	-954

represent ‘pure’ Kōmeitō votes, the Kōmeitō mobilized less votes in general election in Tokyo, Kawasaki, and Kobe. Except for in Sakai City, where it showed 12.4% vote increase between municipal and national elections, the vote increases in Yokohama and Osaka cities remained less than significant. Put differently, the Kōmeitō receives its electoral reward in rural regions, rather than in the urban districts, indicating the party’s difficulty of expanding its support bases in those regions. Kabashima (2014: 377-382) notes upon the increase of Kōmeitō’s PR vote gains in 2003, claiming that the LDP candidates, having realized how critical Kōmeitō’s vote mobilization was in single-member districts in the previous election, engaged in active encouragement of split-voting for its supporters. He points out that the LDP candidates tend to appeal to their supporters to split their votes when he/she is not listed on the LDP’s PR list, or when their support bases are strong enough so that they can afford to giving away some of their electoral resources for the Kōmeitō. In addition, when the competitions are close in their districts, LDP candidates are likely to encourage split-voting in order to muster as many Kōmeitō votes as possible.

At the same time, one of the significant rewards for the Kōmeitō is that the electoral cooperation with the LDP provided the opportunity to expand vote gains in regions which had been unreachable for the Kōmeitō in the past. Though the electoral reward remains relatively small for the Kōmeitō in terms of seat share,¹⁰⁰ its

Table III-11 Case Selection

Prefecture	City	SMDs	Kōmeitō Candidates
Tokyo	23 Special Wards	Tokyo 1-17	Tokyo 12 (2003-)
Kanagawa	Yokohama	Kanagawa 1-3, 5-8	Kanagawa 6
	Kawasaki	Kanagawa 9, 10, 18	
Osaka	Osaka	Osaka 1-6	Osaka 3, 5, 6
	Sakai ¹	Osaka 16-17	Osaka 16
Hyogo	Kobe	Hyogo 1-3	Hyogo 2
Total		38	7

¹⁰⁰ Kabashima estimated that, in 2003, Kōmeitō added two seats from the increase of vote gains in PR.

advancements in the rural and suburban regions became a stepping ground for the pioneering of unexplored regions for the party whose electoral resource was limited largely in urban cities.

While the Kōmeitō's expansion of votes in non-urban regions is an issue worth exploring, in terms of LDP's sustained electoral dominance after the introduction of new electoral rules, it is in the urban districts where this 'adjustment mechanism' installed across three polity levels comes to bear most significant consequences. Standing upon these observations, the rest of this study analyzes the electoral cooperation that takes place mostly in urban districts, in order to elucidate how 'flexible adaptations' to the internal and external environment has sustained the LDP-Kōmeitō electoral alliance. Specifically, Chapter IV deals with the analysis of temporal variations by focusing on Tokyo Special Wards and five government-designated cities in Kanagawa, Osaka, and Hyogo: Yokohama, Kawasaki, Osaka, Sakai, and Kobe Cities ([**Table III-11**]). These cities include districts in which the Kōmeitō had constantly fielded its candidates in single-member districts between 2000 and 2014. The focus on government-designated cities, along with Tokyo special wards, would allow direct comparison of vote mobilizations between national and local elections. Further, because of the Kōmeitō's high leverage in these districts, it shows the variety of adjustment mechanisms that appear during the executions of electoral cooperation.

IV. CROSS-TEMPORAL VARIATIONS IN ELECTORAL COOPERATION: FROM DISCORD TO INTEGRATION, THEN TO DISTRACTION

“In order to resolve a variety of issues and implement practical measures, it is essential to establish a powerful and stable government. I only asked the Kōmeitō for cooperation because I firmly believe that we can both share the responsibility for the resolutions of tasks at hand as well as for the future of Japan.”

—Prime Minister Obuchi Keizo¹⁰¹

The last chapter discussed how the adjustment mechanism was installed across three levels of politics—central, prefectural, and district levels—in order to allow flexible executions of electoral cooperation between the LDP and the Kōmeitō. On the one hand, such mechanism of ‘letting off steam’ was put into place in order to assuage inter-party/organizational rumblings toward the idea of LDP-Kōmeitō alliance. On the other hand, especially from the Kōmeitō’s perspective, it functioned as the mechanism of minimizing risks of over-supporting the LDP counterpart, facing the uncertainty of the durability of this ‘unnatural’ inter-party cooperation. The next two chapters explore how the institutionalized adjustment mechanisms embody themselves during the actual executions of electoral cooperation between the two parties. Particularly, this chapter focuses on elucidating how temporal variations of electoral cooperation is the manifestation of transforming party competition especially at the national level.

The varieties of electoral cooperation can be observed both temporally as well as regionally. In terms of inter-party negotiation at the prefectural level, for example, the divergent levels of cooperation can be observed through the number of ‘recommendations’ given from the Kōmeitō to the LDP candidates. [Figure IV-1] shows the changes of recommendation rates in Lower House elections between 2000 and 2014 in two regions—Kanto (Tokyo and Kanagawa prefectures) and Kansai (Osaka and Hyogo prefectures). While in two prefectures in Kansai the Kōmeitō’s recommendation rate was significantly high from the 2003 election (86.4%), in Kanto, of 41 LDP candidates in two prefectures, only 17 received recommendations from the Kōmeitō in 2003 (41.5%), and it was considerably lower in 2005 as well (63.4%) in comparison to

¹⁰¹ 平井勉 「危うし自自公『三本の矢』」 中央公論 2000年1月号:140－147頁



Figure IV-1 Recommendation Rate in Lower House Elections (2000-2014)

that of Kansai region (92.0%). Further, in terms of overall temporal variations, it is possible to observe a trend that run throughout the two regions—namely a sharp drop in the recommendation rates in the 2012 general election.

The question the next two chapters explore is why such temporal and regional variations take place by looking at the negotiation process at the central and prefectural levels as well as the vote mobilizations at the district levels in metropolitan districts. Particularly, this chapter follows the transformation of LDP-Kōmeitō electoral alliance by shedding light on (1) candidate coordination at the central level, (2) candidate evaluation and timing of recommendations at the prefectural level, and (3) supporter mobilizations at the district levels. The analyses will reveal that the shifts in the structures of competition induced the changes in the two-party relations over the six general elections held between 2000 and 2014, which transformed from discord to integration, then to distraction. At the same time, the consolidation process of two-party alliance, along with the declining levels of cooperation after 2012, was characterized diversity, rather than uniform progress.

1. Unwelcomed Coalition (2000)

1) LDP's Factional Divide and Local Disobedience

As it was explored in the second chapter in detail, the LDP's dramatic 'reconciliation' with the Kōmeitō and the following coalition formation was not molded out of harmonious intra-party consensus. Rather, it must be understood as the outcome of inter-factional rivalry between Keiseikai and Kōchikai in the form of leadership race between hardline and liberal conservatives. It is only natural, therefore, that some LDP members had reservations about the prospects of cooperation with the Kōmeitō. Kato Koichi, then the leader of the second largest faction Kōchikai who also ran against Obuchi for the LDP presidential election in September 1999, attempted to persuade Obuchi to contain the partnership with the Kōmeitō within the framework of non-cabinet alliance. Shirakawa Katsuhiko, one of the most vocal critics of the LDP-Kōmeitō alliance within the LDP, denounced the leadership's decision by claiming that the incorporation of the Kōmeitō into the ruling coalition was a grave violation of the Article

20 of the Japanese Constitution which set forth the separation of politics and religion.¹⁰²

Reflecting such internal discord within the LDP, the initial negotiation over candidate coordination among LDP, Kōmeitō, and the Conservative Party¹⁰³ was colored by factional divide as well as the disobedience among the local LDP organizations vis-à-vis the central leadership. The inter-party negotiation over candidate coordination began soon after the launching of the three-party coalition among LDP, Kōmeitō, and Liberal Party. The critical challenge that needed to be dealt with was how to accommodate twenty-three Kōmeitō candidates, many of whom would be competing against the LDP candidates if no alternative measure was taken. Kōmeitō had endorsed their district candidates on December 17, 1998 in thirteen prefectures, who would be running in the single-member districts in the next general election.¹⁰⁴ The objective of the Kōmeitō was to urge the LDP not to field its candidates in those districts, yet the candidate coordination among three parties were bound to face difficulties, because there were overlaps of candidates in as many districts as eighty.¹⁰⁵ Essentially, three parties saw little improvement in candidate coordination until the Liberal Party split into two groups and the Ozawa group left the coalition in April 2000. Those who remained in the coalition formed the Conservative Party with Oogi Chikage as its leader. It appeared that Ozawa's defection from the coalition with the LDP and the Kōmeitō reflected his dissatisfaction with the LDP's treatment of LP candidates in the earlier negotiations on candidate endorsement. The LP planned to field as many as eighty candidates in districts for the upcoming general election, yet the coordination arrangement with the LDP was going nowhere, for the LDP was reluctant to give up that many districts for little prospects for electoral contribution from the party with less than significant local

¹⁰² 白川勝彦「自公連立は憲法違反である」世界 1999年11月号(668号):176—177頁

¹⁰³ Conservative Party was reorganized under the leadership of Oogi Chikage, after the Ozawa group left the Liberal Party.

¹⁰⁴ 公明新聞 1998年12月18日、1頁。Twenty-three candidates were endorsed in the following districts in thirteen prefectures: Hokkaido District 2; Saitama Districts 3 and 6; Chiba District 2; Tokyo Districts 4, 17, 20, and 24; Kanagawa District 6; Shizuoka District 1; Aichi Districts 1 and 6; Kyoto District 3; Osaka Districts 3, 5, 6, 10, and 16; Hyogo District 2 and 8; Tokushima District 1; and Okinawa District 1

¹⁰⁵ 朝日新聞 1999年11月17日 6頁

organizations.¹⁰⁶

One of the most significant characteristics of the candidate coordination among the LDP, Kōmeitō, and the Conservative Party after the defection of the Ozawa Group from the Liberal Party was the degree of concessions made by the LDP leadership to the two small-sized coalition partners. In late May, three parties sat down and discussed the candidate coordination regarding forty districts, and the LDP conceded twenty-five districts to the Kōmeitō and the Conservative Party. Among them, fourteen districts were set aside for the Kōmeitō candidates and eleven for the Conservative Party. Kōmeitō, on the other hand, pulled out from three districts—Saitama 3, Tokyo 24, and Tokushima 1—, among which two of the proposed candidates were listed on top of the regional PR list instead, while the Conservative Party gave up four districts. Such significant concessions made by the LDP displayed the degree of commitment to the coalition alliance.

On the negotiation table, the first rule of candidate coordination rested on the precedence of incumbents. Of the twenty-one districts, the incumbents were given priority endorsements over first-time candidates in six districts in Osaka and Aichi prefectures.¹⁰⁷ In other districts, however, the situations occurred when both parties had incumbent candidates in the same district. When the conflict of interests occurred, the first principle applied to these districts was to consider the results of previous election held in 1996. In Osaka 3, Hyogo 2, and Okinawa 1, where all prospective candidates from the two parties were incumbents, the LDP conceded to the Kōmeitō on the ground that the Kōmeitō candidates had won in the previous election—the LDP candidates in those three districts lost the district competition yet had been ‘resurrected’ in the PR system. The exception was the case of Morita Kensaku who sought party endorsement in Tokyo district 4. Morita was elected in the 1998 by-election after Arai Shokei, who was elected from Tokyo District 4 in the 1996 general election, died in February 1998. The LDP leadership planned to have Morita listed in the PR instead of giving him district endorsement, for the Kōmeitō sought the endorsement of Endo Kimihiko in the district. Endo first ran in the former Tokyo district 2 in the 1990 general election, where he won

¹⁰⁶ 朝日新聞 2000年3月11日 7頁

¹⁰⁷ Aichi 1 and 6, Osaka 5, 6, 10, and 16

for the two consecutive terms by earning more than 70,000 votes under the old electoral system. The new Tokyo District 4, reorganized after the electoral reform, inherited large part of former Tokyo District 2, including Ota ward, where the Kōmeitō had shown significant strength in previous national as well as local elections. Furthermore, Ota ward entailed significant meaning for a number of Sōka Gakkai members, for it is the birthplace of their religious leader, Ikeda Daisaku. The LDP leadership decided to make a concession to the Kōmeitō in Tokyo District 4, and Morita was eventually denied the party endorsement. While he first agreed to be listed on the PR list, Morita eventually ran as independent candidate in District 4.

At the same time, it was not simply the matter of ‘commitment’ to the three-party initiative that LDP leadership hoped to display in the process of district endorsement; the central leadership utilized the power of central leadership in candidate endorsement in order to protect their interests and contain those who are critical towards them. As Morita’s case suggests, some prospective LDP candidates were dissatisfied with the leadership’s ‘principles’ on district endorsement. While Morita may have been the only winning incumbent candidate who was denied the party endorsement, he was by no means the only one who went against the leadership’s decision on the concession to the Kōmeitō. There were a few first-time candidates who first agreed to put off their candidacies but in the end rebelled against the party leadership and ran as independent candidates. Both Sato Shigeru (Kanagawa 6) and Shimizu Seiichiro (Tokyo 20) were first-time candidates who were denied the party endorsement from the LDP leadership yet were supported by the respective *kenren* (local party branch) and local support organizations as independent candidates. Sato was to face Ueda Isamu, the only Kōmeitō candidate in Kanagawa prefecture. His decision to run as independent candidate left not-so-small frictions for the LDP-Kōmeitō cooperation in Kanagawa. Reflecting the dissonance between the two parties concerning the local LDP’s decision to support Sato, of seventeen districts in Kanagawa, only three of sixteen LDP candidates received nominations from the Kōmeitō. Shimizu ran in the 1996 election as an LDP candidate and was defeated by then NFP candidate Oono Yuriko, who was now running as Kōmeitō candidate by less than 1000 votes. Seeking revenge, Shimizu also sought party

endorsement but without success. It was again the local LDP *kenren* and his support organization that backed Shimizu's campaign.

The most essential factor that determined the level of success and failure in candidate coordination at the initial stage of the LDP-Kōmeitō cooperation was the factional power balance—simply stated, whether the LDP candidates who were denied the party endorsements complied to leadership's decision depended on their factional affiliations. The prospective candidates who belonged to the Hashimoto faction (former Obuchi faction, Aichi 1 and 6) as well as the Kamei/Eto faction (Osaka 3, 5, 10) followed the leadership's decision on the party endorsement. Kamei Shizuka, once a well-known anti-Kōmeitō/Sōka Gakkai critic within the LDP, changed his strategy in light of new factional environment. The Kamei group defected from the Mitsuzuka faction (Seiwa Group, today's Hosoda faction) after internal strife, and in March 1999 had merged with what was left of Watanabe faction (Shisui Group, today's Nikai faction) after the defection of Yamazaki group. Facing relative vulnerability of the new faction as well as the rivalry with the Yamazaki faction, Kamei's decision was to comply with the party leadership and criticize the “selfishness” of the candidates who belonged to the rivaling faction such as Morita Kensaku in Tokyo District 4.¹⁰⁸

On the other hand, the most rebellious were Kato and Yamazaki factions, whose leaders showed little hesitation in openly supporting those who failed to receive party endorsements in such district as Kanagawa 6, Shizuoka 1, Tokyo 20, and Tokyo 4. Such ‘factional rebellion’ reflected party leadership's rather discriminating treatment of the Kato and Yamazaki factions in candidate endorsement. The most exemplary case was the case of Tokushima 1 and Kochi 1. In Tokushima 1, LDP's first-time candidate Okamoto Yoshiro was seeking party endorsement along with Endo Kazuyoshi from the Kōmeitō. In Kochi 1, similarly, LDP's Fukui Teru and Kōmeitō's Ishida Noritoshi were seeking endorsements. The LDP and Kōmeitō leadership agreed upon the bartering of candidates in these two districts in Shikoku province—giving one district to each party. The LDP

¹⁰⁸ 朝日新聞 2000年6月15日 35頁(東京1面)。Kamei gave speech for Kōmeitō candidate Endo Okihiko, who was competing against Morita in Tokyo district 4, claiming that Morita's selfish action harms the cooperative relationship between the LDP and the Kōmeitō nationally.

leadership wasted no time in endorsing Okamoto for Tokushima 1, who belonged to the Hashimoto/Obuchi faction, despite the fact that both Okamoto and Fukui were first-time candidates. Witnessing Hashimoto/Obuchi's prioritization of its faction member, the Fukui camp grew anxious about the prospects of party endorsement. Kochi *kenren* declared to the party leadership that, if the party refuses to give official endorsement to Fukui, then the *kenren* would go against the leadership's decision and support Fukui on its own, refusing to cooperate with the Kōmeitō in any way.¹⁰⁹ In the end, the LDP leadership gave official endorsement to Fukui, making Kochi 1 one of four districts where LDP-Kōmeitō battle took place. Such decision seems to be motivated by the leadership's concern over assuaging the discontent within the party, which could lead to another intra-party strife over the issue of cooperation with the Kōmeitō. In other words, the LDP leadership found itself in the need of finding the balance point not only with the Kōmeitō but also among the factional power balances ([Table IV-1]).

Shizuoka District 1 was another example of factional rivalry at the central level being reflected on the endorsement process. Along with three other districts—Chiba 2, Tokyo 17, and Kochi 1—the LDP and the Kōmeitō were unable to settle on the candidate coordination in Shizuoka District 1, where LDP's Totsuka Shinya and Kōmeitō's Ooguchi Yoshinori came face-to-face against each other, along with two other potent candidates Kamikawa Yoko (Independent) and Makino Seishu (DPJ). In the 1996 election, it was Ooguchi who won against Totsuka, and, according to the principles, Ooguchi should have claimed the precedence as joint candidate. Yet the inter-factional rivalry between Keiseikai and Kochikai overshadowed the cooperation with the Kōmeitō, when Kamikawa Yoko, an LDP member who was supported by local Kochikai keiretsu politicians, sought party endorsement in Shizuoka District 1. Even though the LDP's official party endorsement was given to Totsuka, a Keiseikai member, in order to contain the movement of Kochikai politicians in Shizuoka, Kamikawa won the election by receiving support from local LDP politicians as well as the intermediary organizations affiliated to the Kato faction at the national level (Taniguchi 2004: 55-75).¹¹⁰ Kōmeitō's

¹⁰⁹ 読売新聞 2000年5月26日 大阪朝刊 31頁

¹¹⁰ Taniguchi gives detailed analysis on endorsement process as well as the movements

Table IV-1 Results of candidate coordination between the LDP and the Kōmeitō in SMDs in the 2000 general election

District	Name of LDP candidate	Faction	Candidate Status / Endorsement		Kōmeitō candidate
Saitama 3	Imai Hiroshi	Kato	Incumbent	O	WITHDRAWN
Saitama 6	--	--	--	--	Wakamatsu Kaneshige
Chiba 2	Eguchi Kazuo	Mori	Incumbent	O	Tomita Shigeyuki
Tokyo 4	Morita Kensaku	Yamazaki	Incumbent	X	Endo Kimihiko
Tokyo 17	Hirasawa Katsuei	Obuchi	Incumbent	O	Yamaguchi Natsuo
Tokyo 20	Shimizu Seiichiro	Kato	New	X	Oono Yuriko
Tokyo 24	Kobayashi Tamon	Kato	Incumbent	O	WITHDRAWN
Kanagawa 6	Sato Shigeru	Kato	New	X	Ueda Isamu
Shizuoka 1	Totsuka Shinya	Obuchi	Former	O	Ooguchi Yoshinori
Aichi 1	Tanida Takehiko	Obuchi	New	X	Hirata Yoneo
Aichi 6	Ooki Hiroshi	Eto/Kamei	Incumbent	X	Kusakawa Shozo
Osaka 3	Yanagimoto Takuji	Eto/Kamei	Incumbent	X	Tabata Masahiro
Osaka 5	Nakayama Yasuhide	Eto/Kamei	New	X	Taniguchi Takayoshi
Osaka 6	Konishi Keiichiro	??	New	X	Fukushima Yutaka
Osaka 10	Hayashi Shonosuke	Eto/Kamei	New	X	Ishigaki Kazuo
Osaka 16	Masago Taizo	??	New	X	Kitagawa Kazuo
Hyogo 2	Okutani Toru	Yamazaki	Incumbent	X	Akaba Kazuyoshi
Hyogo 8	Muroi Kunihiro	??	New	X	Fuyushiba Tetsuzo
Tokushima 1	Okamoto Yoshiro	Obuchi	New	O	WITHDRAWN
Kochi 1	Fukui Teru	Kato	New	O	Ishida Noritoshi
Okinawa 1	Shimoji Mikiro	Obuchi	Incumbent	X	Shiraho Taiichi

among local LDP politicians regarding the Shizuoka District 1.

Ooguchi, on the other hand, having failed to consolidate the conservative support he had once received as an NFP candidate, ended up in the third place after Makino Seishu. The case of Shizuoka District 1 illustrates how inter-factional rivalry between Keiseikai and Kochikai overshadowed the inter-party cooperative mechanism between the LDP and Kōmeitō. The Hashimoto (former Obuchi) faction's endorsement of its member exposed their desire to contain the rivaling Kato faction, which was prioritized before the consolidation of local electoral alliance with the Kōmeitō.

As these cases illustrate, the initial candidate coordination between the LDP and the Kōmeitō was characterized by factional strife between Obuchi/Hashimoto faction and Kato-Yamazaki alliance, whose dividing point, at least on the surface, was the question of coalition alliance with the Kōmeitō. For the LDP leadership, the party endorsement became a tool through which the Keiseikai leadership (and the Mori cabinet for that matter) would contain non-cooperative factions within the party. Simply stated, the LDP leadership showed little hesitation in endorsing Kōmeitō candidates only when the prospective LDP candidates in the respective districts were affiliated with rivaling factions. When it came to their own faction members, on the other hand, the party leadership allowed the direct confrontation with the Kōmeitō to take place by endorsing the LDP candidates in Chiba 2, Tokyo 17, and Shizuoka 1.

At the same time, it is significant that the candidate coordination between the LDP and the Kōmeitō at the central level exposed the enlarged power of LDP's central leadership. Regardless of the actual electoral results, the rebellion by the non-mainstream factions was repressed by the central leadership who essentially came to monopolize the power of endorsement after the electoral system reform. Further, it is significant that such intra-party conflicts also appeared in the forms of center-local conflicts within the LDP's party organization. For the candidates who failed to receive party endorsements, the decisions to defy the party's central leadership and ran as independent candidates were possible because of the high level of autonomy among the local LDP *kenren*, as well as the relative independence of the candidate's personal local networks, including their keiretsu local politicians. In other words, the LDP's local party branches remained autonomous in making the decisions on whom to support during general elections. Such

local disobedience seems to have derived from prevalent factional practice as well as the lack of strong party discipline at the local level. In addition, the ‘rebellion’ of the members of Kato and Yamazaki factions elucidates that the disciplinary power of faction continued to function in the early phases of electoral competition under the new electoral system.

2) **Voters’ Discontent**

Despite the leadership’s effort to subdue those who were unwilling to comply with the party’s decisions, it was another matter when it came to the question of supporter mobilizations. While the above section elucidated an aspect of electoral cooperation that took place at the level of party leadership, it is also necessary to shed light on the electoral alliances that are carried out among the party supporters in determining the level of success and failure of the interparty cooperation. As the following analyses show, the mobilization of supporters was mediated by personally-cultivated political resources of individual candidates rather than the simple party labels, which impeded the smooth ‘relocation of votes’ between LDP and Kōmeitō camps in the 2000 general election.

In terms of candidate negotiation at the prefectural level, the two parties succeeded in soft-landing. Of 271 LDP candidates nationwide, the Kōmeitō gave recommendations to 161 of them, marking the recommendation rate for the 2000 Lower House election at 59.4%. Of them, 116 LDP candidates received recommendations after the first evaluation held on June 8, while the last recommendation was given to Ishiba Shigaru in Tottori District 1 on June 20, only five days before the election. On the other hand, a total of 56 LDP candidates ran in four prefectures—Tokyo, Kanagawa, Osaka, and Hyogo—, of whom 31 candidates received recommendations (55.4%). What was characteristic was the fact that, in Kanagawa, only three of sixteen LDP candidates received recommendations from the Kōmeitō.

The two parties ended up having completely different views on the value of electoral cooperation after the 2000 general election. While the LDP fell short of a simple majority by eight seats, the Mori cabinet, having earned 56% of the Lower House seats with Kōmeitō and Conservative Party, declared that the coalition government had earned

people's confidence in pursuing economic recovery and structural reforms ([Figure IV-2]).¹¹¹ The Kōmeitō, on the other hand, was far from being satisfied with the result. The party who had managed to maintain the party strength of about fifty seats in the Lower House under the old electoral system ended up with thirty-one seats. Particularly, the results in the eighteen SMDs were most disappointing; the Kōmeitō, who had prided in the 100% election rate, barely secured seven districts among eighteen districts where it fielded its candidates. The Kōmei Shinbun's review on the result of the 2000 general election bluntly expressed Kōmeitō's frustration:

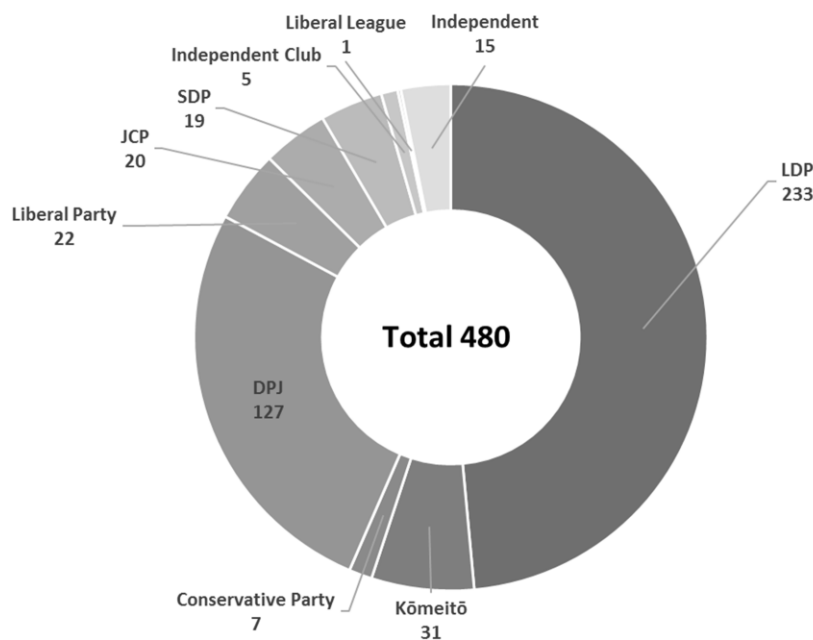


Figure IV-2 Result of 2000 Lower House Election

¹¹¹ 公明新聞 2000年6月27日 1頁「三党連立政権合意」

In this election, the LDP, Kōmeitō, and the Conservative Party carried out electoral cooperation, and the Kōmeitō nominated 178 candidates (LDP 161, CP 13, Kaikaku 3, Independent1), putting our fullest efforts in supporting all candidates. Many LDP candidates in the districts managed to win with our support. However, it was overall a difficult election for the Kōmeitō's district candidates who faced difficulty in infiltrating into the LDP supporters.¹¹²

At the liaison council meeting held shortly after the general election between Kōmeitō and Sōka Gakkai, Sōka Gakkai questioned the 'efficacy' of the electoral cooperation with the LDP, urging the party to carry out detailed evaluation on the value of cooperation.¹¹³ As these 'complaints' clearly indicate, the Kōmeitō was made aware of the difficulty of competing in single-member districts under its unique banner, and came to question whether cooperation with the LDP was the ideal way of overcoming the new electoral challenges. At the same time, their frustration was directed toward the lack of support from the LDP supporters, despite their own understanding that the Kōmeitō supporters worked wholeheartedly in the execution of electoral cooperation.

The Kōmeitō's frustration toward the LDP was well-founded; the Kōmeitō benefitted little from 'cooperating' with the LDP in the fourteen districts where its candidates received nomination from the LDP. First, the cooperation was virtually nonexistent between the LDP and the Kōmeitō in the four districts where former LDP candidates (who failed to receive party endorsement) ran as independent candidates. In Tokyo 20, for example, Kōmeitō's Oono Yuriko's vote gain increased only by 5.5% (about 3,000 votes) since the 1996 election. While Shizumu Seiichiro, the former LDP independent, decreased his vote gains, the vote split between Oono and Shimizu eventually allowed the DPJ candidate Kato Koichi to win a landslide victory in the district.¹¹⁴ It was possible to observe the similar trend in Hyogo 8, where Kōmeitō candidate Fuyushiba Tetsuzo won the district. His vote counts increased by mere 6.4% (about 4500 votes), while former LDP Muroi Kunihiko lost about 5,600 votes yet earned more than 50,000 votes.¹¹⁵ Other than these two districts, Morita Kensaku in Tokyo 4

¹¹² 公明新聞 2000年6月26日 1頁

¹¹³ 公明新聞 2000年7月8日 1頁

¹¹⁴ Result of Tokyo 20 (2000): Kato Koichi (DPJ) 93,236; Oono Yuriko (Kōmeitō) 58,613; Shimizu Seiichiro (Independent) 48,613; Suzuki Ikuo (JCP) 35,826.

¹¹⁵ Result of Hyogo 8 (2000): Fuyushiba Tetsuzo (Kōmeitō) 75,380; Muroi Kunihiko

received an overwhelming support as independent candidate, and in Kanagawa 6 the vote split between the Kōmeitō and former LDP candidates paved a way for the election of DPJ candidate. Simply stated, the party label mattered far less than each of the candidates' capability to muster personal support. Just as the race for endorsement implied, the centralization effect of the new electoral system was yet to penetrate into the local logics as well as among the supporters.

At the same time, however, it is premature to automatically assign the cause for the lack of electoral cooperation to the existence of former LDP candidates in the respective districts. In other words, the voters' discontent with the idea of supporting Kōmeitō candidates, and by extension the idea of LDP-Kōmeitō coalition government, appeared in the form of increased support for alternative conservative party—namely the DPJ candidates. The cases of other districts show that even the absence of (former) LDP candidates did not lead to the increase of Kōmeitō's vote gains. For example, Kōmeitō's Kusakawa Shozo ran as joint candidate in Aichi 6 where he had run as an NFP candidate four years before. Despite the absence of LDP candidate, however, his vote counts only increased by 200 votes (+0.2%) from the previous campaign, falling behind the elected DPJ candidate by about 5,400 votes. Similarly, in Osaka 10, Kōmeitō's joint candidate Ishigaki Kazuo increased his vote gain only by 1,485 (+2.8%), falling short by 731 votes of elected SDP candidate Tsujimoto Kiyomi.

It is possible to grasp the pattern of vote increase for Kōmeitō candidates when we look at six other districts where the same NFP/Kōmeitō candidates ran in both 1996 and 2000 general elections. [Table IV-2] shows the vote increase of Kōmeitō candidates between the 1996 and the 2000 general elections in six districts where Kōmeitō candidates won, along with the vote counts and party affiliation of the runner-up candidate. While the vote increase was virtually nonexistent in districts where the Kōmeitō candidates faced competitive conservative candidates (Osaka 5 and Osaka 16), the Kōmeitō candidates whose strongest opponents were JCP candidates showed relatively significant vote increases (Osaka 3, Osaka 6, Hyogo 2, Okinawa 1).

(Independent) 50,246; Fujiki Yoko (JCP) 42,902; Kitagawa Renko (SDP) 35,740; Matsuo Masao (LL) 10,040.

Particularly, the level of cooperation between the LDP and the Kōmeitō was most significant in Okinawa 1, where Shiraho Taiichi marked the vote increase of 62.8%.

The results of the Kōmeitō candidates in single-member districts in the 2000 general election illuminated the LDP voters' unwillingness to sanction the LDP-Kōmeitō coalition partnership. The voting behavior indicated that they would rather vote for other conservative candidate than the Kōmeitō candidates—in a way, the result most vividly exposed the deep chasm that lay between the supporters of the two parties. After the election, one defeated Kōmeitō candidate aptly expressed the difficulty of electoral cooperation with the LDP: “You cannot force someone to marry after a brief arranged meeting.”¹¹⁶ While Kōmeitō learned the hard lesson, the LDP was also made to realize the limitations of central coordination when it came to nudging the individual candidate's personal support base into supporting the Kōmeitō candidates. After all, the absence of potent conservative candidate led to the increase of vote gains among the Kōmeitō candidates, rather than the party-initiated ground for cooperation. Relatively positive results from the districts where the Kōmeitō faced JCP candidates—such as Osaka 3, Osaka 6, Hyogo 2 and Okinawa 1—implied that there was room for deepening electoral

Table IV-2 Comparison of electoral results (1996 and 2000 general elections) of Kōmeitō candidates in SMDs

	Kōmeitō Candidate	1996 vote count	2000 vote count	Vote increase (%)	Runner-up (2000)	
					Party	Vote count
Osaka 3	Tabata Masahiro	76,938	90,605	17.8%	JCP	74,055
Osaka 5	Kunishige Toru	74,925	79,018	0.5%	DPJ	66,679
Osaka 6	Fukushima Yutaka	85,173	96,432	13.2%	JCP	66,268
Osaka 16	Kitagawa Kazuo	61,084	64,150	5.0%	Ind.	51,055
Hyogo 2	Akaba Kazuyoshi	63,676	79,750	25.2%	JCP	66,820
Okinawa 1	Shiraho Taiichi	52,975	86,255	62.8%	JCP	50,709

¹¹⁶ 読売新聞 2000年6月27日 38頁

alliances between the LDP and the Kōmeitō as ‘non-progressive alliance.’

At the same time, the unwillingness of the LDP voters to support the Kōmeitō candidates in the single-member districts does not necessarily suggest that the overall LDP-Kōmeitō electoral cooperation in the 2000 general election proved to be ineffective—it was quite the contrary. For the LDP, the electoral mobilization from the Kōmeitō supporters functioned as a life-support that salvaged a significant number of candidates in the single-member competitions. A few analyses indicate that the cooperation from the Kōmeitō supporters was critical in the successful election of the LDP candidates, particularly in urban districts. Kabashima (2014) estimates that about 34 to 44 LDP candidates would have lost if Kōmeitō supporters did not vote for the LDP candidates in respective districts—and the number would have even been a lot higher if Kōmeitō decided to cooperate with the DPJ candidates (321-325). Kawato (2004), comparing the LDP’s vote in PR to that of respective single-member districts, argued that the LDP’s higher vote counts in SMDs than in PR demonstrate the successful vote relocation from the Kōmeitō supporters to the LDP candidates (243-250). Simply speaking, the LDP and Kōmeitō ended up with perceiving the value of electoral cooperation quite differently. The LDP was made realize the strategic significance of the Kōmeitō votes—and at the same time its forlorn vulnerability in the urban regions under the new electoral environment. The Kōmeitō also came to face its bounded limitation on the critical mission of expanding its support base; it was clear from the reluctance of the conservative voters that the party must take on different approaches in expanding—or at least maintaining—its party strength in the parliament.

3) **Drive for ‘Second Electoral Reform’**

For the Kōmeitō, the experience of the 2000 general election exposed the party’s vulnerability under the new electoral rules. Of eleven districts in which Kōmeitō’s district candidates lost the election, only in four districts—Saitama 6, Shizuoka 1, Aichi 6, and Osaka 10—the competition came close—marking the losing ratio (LR) above 90% [Table IV-3]. The Kōmeitō was only able to mark high losing ratio in these districts because of the vote split among potent candidates in these districts (except for Saitama 6).

Table IV-3 Kōmeitō Candidate's Losing Ratio (LR) in SMDs (2000 LH)

	#candidate	1st Place	Kōmeitō's LR (%)
Saitama 6	4	DPJ	97.1%
Chiba 2	5	DPJ	57.7%
Tokyo 4	5	Independent	64.2%
Tokyo 17	4	LDP	78.1%
Tokyo 20	4	DPJ	62.9%
Kanagawa 6	5	DPJ	67.6%
Shizuoka 1	6	Independent	95.9%
Aichi 1	6	DPJ	67.5%
Aichi 6	6	DPJ	94.5%
Osaka 10	5	SDP	98.7%
Kochi 1	4	LDP	80.2%

In other districts, other conservative candidates, mostly DPJ, proved to possess more coherent pool of supporters than the Kōmeitō candidates. Furthermore, the prospects of two-party competition centering on the two largest conservative parties—LDP and DPJ—as well as the shrinking number of conservative candidates per district were unnerving factors for the Kōmeitō who faced the insufficiency of its support bases even in the districts where it had the most concentrated pool of supporters.

Facing the pragmatic limitations of both its own support base and the vote-relocation from the LDP supporters, Kōmeitō's first strategic move in the aftermath of 2000 general election was to pursue another institutional reform. First, within a matter of few months, Kōmeitō's aggressive advocacy on the replacement of closed-list PR system with open-list system in the Upper House election led to the passing of the related bill on October 26, 2000. Unlike the closed-list system, the open-list system would allow the voters to write out the name of a party, as well as the name of a specific candidate. The Kōmeitō believed that non-Kōmeitō voters would feel less repulsive if they could vote for a candidate, rather than for the party. Perhaps partly due to this institutional change, the Kōmeitō managed to mobilize 8,180,000 votes in the PR in the 2001 UH election, the highest number in the party's history. Second, the Kōmeitō began attempting to widen its foothold. Since early October 2000, it began holding regular policy consultation meeting

with *Rengo*, the largest support organization for the DPJ.¹¹⁷ Though Kōmeitō-Rengo liaison did not last long as the DPJ began to approach the JCP in light of the upcoming UH election, it symbolized the Kōmeitō's anxiety in dealing with the challenge of SMD competitions in the future general elections.

Yet the most fundamental change the Kōmeitō sought to implement was the electoral system reform for the Lower House election. Shortly after the launching of the 1st Koizumi cabinet in April 2001, the three-party coalition government launched the Lower House Council on Electoral System Reform (衆議院選挙制度改革協議会). In this regularly-held council meeting, Kōmeitō repeatedly proposed the reinstitution of mid-sized multi-member system consisted of 150 districts with district magnitude of three, reducing the total number of representative to 450.¹¹⁸ The LDP, on the other hand, was unable to reach intraparty agreement on the Kōmeitō's proposal. Instead, they came up with the so-called Nakayama Proposal, upon which the three party came to general agreement on September 2001.¹¹⁹ Nakayama Proposal suggested that, while most districts continue to take on the existing single-member districts, in large cities—including Tokyo Special Wards and other government-designated cities—the district magnitude was to be raised up to four. Obviously, the system was designed most advantageously for the LDP-Kōmeitō electoral alliance who had conflicting objectives regarding the territorial claims in urban districts. As expected, the opposition parties' reaction to the proposed electoral reform was emblazoned by criticism against Kōmeitō, some even claiming that the Kōmeitō and the LDP must have made a secret pact in order to pass the controversial Act on Special Measures Against Terrorism in return for the institution of Kōmeitō-friendly electoral system. Kōmeitō's then secretary-general Fuyushiba Tetsuzo denied such conspiracy with the LDP; he claimed that the Nakayama Proposal does not work advantageously for the Kōmeitō, and it is not the party's intension to push through LDP's proposal.¹²⁰ Unable to fend off public criticism and

¹¹⁷ 公明新聞 2000年10月4日 1頁

¹¹⁸ 公明新聞 2001年5月17日 1頁

¹¹⁹ 公明新聞 2001年9月21日 1頁

¹²⁰ 公明新聞 2001年10月31日 2頁

convince the coalition partner on the merit of multi-member system, the Kōmeitō agreed to put off electoral system reform for one year on October 31, 2001,¹²¹ and to hold next general election under the current electoral system.¹²² While the Kōmeitō's effort to reinstitute multi-member district system did not bear significant fruit, it showed the party's discontent with the new electoral system and elucidated its impatience over the loss of electoral autonomy.

Overall, the electoral alliance under the 2000 general election was characterized by LDP's inter-party factional conflicts at the central level which became evident within the inter-party negotiation over candidate coordination, along with relatively moderate number of recommendations issued for the LDP candidates at the prefectural level. At the same time, the most characteristic of the LDP-Kōmeitō electoral alliance in the 2000 Lower House election was the limited support mobilization at the district level, particularly from the LDP supporters to the Kōmeitō candidates in urban districts.

2. Three-Legged Race under the Two-Party System (2003-2005)

As the Kōmeitō's athirst drive for the second electoral reform indicated, the party's primary concerns in terms of future electoral competition derived from the prospects for two-party competition centered around the LDP and the DPJ. For the Kōmeitō, overwhelming electoral defeats in the single-member districts were indicative of not only the fact that party did not possess enough support to win in most district competition, but also the level of uncertainty when it came to acquiring support from conservative, LDP supporters. For the LDP, on the other hand, the immediate 'threat' derived from the external factor—namely the rise of DPJ particularly in the urban districts. Of thirty-five metropolitan districts in Tokyo, Kanagawa, Osaka, and Hyogo, LDP won thirteen against DPJ's thirteen, while Kōmeitō won four districts in two Kansai prefectures ([Table IV-4]).¹²³ And it was precisely the rise of the DPJ, which connoted the rise of two-party

¹²¹ 公明新聞 2001年11月1日 1頁

¹²² 公明新聞 2002年4月13日 2頁

¹²³ Tokyo Districts 1-17; Kanagawa Districts 1-3, 5-10; Osaka Districts 1,2, and 4; Hyogo Districts 1-3.

Table IV-4 Results of SMD competition in the 2000 general election in metropolitan districts

	LDP	DPJ	KÔMEITÔ	CP	IND.	OTHER	TOTAL
TOKYO	6	7	0	1	3	0	17
KANAGAWA	4	4	0	0	0	1	9
OSAKA	3	0	3	0	0	0	6
HYOGO	0	2	1	0	0	0	3
TOTAL	13	13	4	1	3	1	35

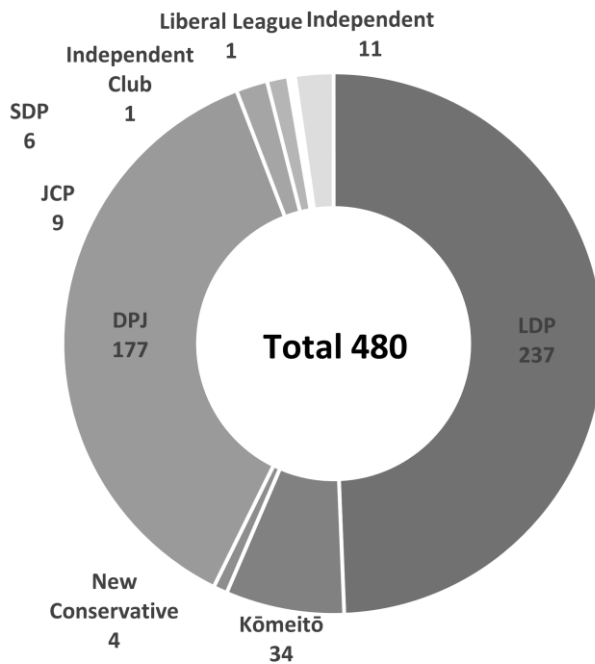


Figure IV-3 Result of 2003 Lower House Election

competition, that induced higher level of LDP-Kōmeitō coalition in 2003.

The 2003 general election, held on November 9, 2003, is referred to as the first ‘manifesto election’ in which the two largest parties, namely the LDP and the DPJ, competed under the maturing two-party competition. The average competition rate for 300 single-member districts went down to 3.42, even though the JCP fielded its candidate in every district. Further, the two largest parties—LDP and DPJ—earned 80.5% of the total votes in SMDs. Almost a decade had passed since the introduction of the new electoral rules, and the arrival of the ‘two-party system’ was welcomed as a positive sign that indicated the establishment of party-centered electoral competitions in Japan.

At the same time, the result of the election elucidated the LDP’s growing reliance on the Kōmeitō in the single-member districts. The LDP earned the total of 237 seats, of which 168 were elected in single-member districts. Kawato (2004) points out that the growing tendency for two-party competitions in single-member districts led to the appreciation of the value of Kōmeitō votes, especially because the differences in vote gains between LDP and DPJ candidates were significantly small in many districts. He analyzes 234 districts in which the LDP and DPJ candidates ended up first and second places. Of them, only in eighty-five districts the LDP candidates won by winning 10% more votes than the counterpart. Given the Kōmeitō’s vote-collecting capability in each district, which he estimated as average of 14.8% in each single-member district, he concludes that the LDP-Kōmeitō majority in the Lower House was accomplished “almost entirely due to electoral cooperation with the Kōmeitō” (Ibid: 269-272). In a similar vein, Kabashima (2014) also argues that the LDP’s reliance on the Kōmeitō enhanced in 2003. His estimation of the Kōmeitō’s ‘contribution’ to LDP candidate in each district comes from the Kōmeitō’s vote gain in PR in corresponding district, and concludes that almost half of elected LDP candidates would have lost if not for the votes from the Kōmeitō supporters (376-380). He also points out a new trend that was not seen before in the execution of electoral cooperation between the two parties: the increase of LDP voters who voted for the Kōmeitō in PR. He argues that Kōmeitō increased its vote gains by a million votes in PR between 2000 and 2003 elections, and such increase derived from LDP’s larger efforts to encourage its voters to support the coalition partner

in PR, especially in rural regions. He presents a hypothesis that the Kōmeitō's vote increase in PR is particularly significant in regions where LDP is relatively strong (Ibid: 381-382).

As the two scholars equally emphasize, the level of electoral cooperation between the LDP and the Kōmeitō deepened in 2003, particularly due to structural changes in electoral competition—the rise of two-party system, and the two parties demonstrated ‘three-legged race’—mutual cooperative efforts to keep pace with one another. At the same time, however, the consolidation process of electoral alliance between the two parties was characterized by the lapse in both degrees of inter-party negotiation and vote mobilization in the urban districts. This section analyzes the electoral cooperation between the LDP and the Kōmeitō in urban districts under the two-party system—particularly in Tokyo's 23 special ward districts and the government designated cities in Kanagawa, Osaka, and Hyogo, where Kōmeitō fielded its candidates in single-member districts.

1) **Slow Consolidation of Urban Coordination at Prefectural Level**

Having learned the insufficiency of fielding district candidates in competition against the LDP candidates under the growing tendency for two-partism, the Kōmeitō's endorsement strategy in the 2003 election shifted drastically from the previous election. The Kōmeitō reduced the number of district candidates in 2003, giving the firsthand endorsements to ten candidates on July 3, 2003, in Tokyo, Kanagawa, Osaka, Hyogo, and Okinawa prefectures—about three months before the dissolution of the Diet.¹²⁴ Kōmeitō requested to the LDP to consider recommending the Kōmeitō candidates in advance, to which the LDP responded by providing seven recommendations on August 28.¹²⁵ Concerning the remaining three candidates—Ota Akihiro (Tokyo 12), Tabata Masahiro (Osaka 3), and Shiraho Taiichi (Okinawa 1)—the LDP withheld the answer. As the dissolution of the Lower House drew near, on October 3, the LDP succeeded in persuading those who were seeking endorsements in Tokyo 12 and Osaka 3 to suspend

¹²⁴ Saitama 6, Tokyo 12, Kanagawa 6, Osaka 3, Osaka 5, Osaka 6, Osaka 16, Hyogo 2, Hyogo 8, Okinawa 1

¹²⁵ Saitama 6, Kanagawa 6, Osaka 5, Osaka 6, Osaka 16, Hyogo 2, Hyogo 8

their candidacy, but instead promised to list them at the top of respective regional PR list.¹²⁶ In return, the Kōmeitō began the evaluation process of the LDP candidates soon after the dissolution of the Lower House, giving recommendations to total of 199 candidates nationwide (recommendation rate 71.8%).¹²⁷ The LDP, on the other hand, recommended all ten Kōmeitō candidates at the end, including Shiraho Taichi from Okinawa District 1.

In terms of recommendations from the Kōmeitō to the LDP candidates, on the other hand, such sign for maturity was not observed in urban districts in 2003. In thirty-six single-member districts in metropolitan regions, LDP fielded a total of thirty candidates, conceding six districts to the Kōmeitō. Of them, fifteen LDP candidates received recommendations from the Kōmeitō, marking the recommendation rate at 50%. This rate was equal to the previous 2000 general election, in which the recommendation rate among the twenty-eight LDP candidates in these districts was also 50% (fourteen of twenty-eight LDP candidates received recommendations). It indicates that the levels of inter-party cooperation in terms of recommendations from the Kōmeitō to the LDP candidates in urban districts did not see improvement, but instead remained stagnant. Further, the Kōmeitō's indisposition was evident in the low recommendation rate among the first-time LDP candidates in urban districts. Among thirty LDP candidates, nine of them were new candidates in the respective districts, but only two of them received recommendations from the Kōmeitō: Matsumoto Fumiaki (Tokyo District 7) and Nakayama Yasuhide (Osaka 4). While Matsumoto received nomination from the Kōmeitō on the third round (October 27), Nakayama was one of the first to be listed on Kōmeitō's recommendation list announced on October 16. The reason for the swift recommendation of Nakayama in Osaka District 4 was rooted in his withdrawal of candidacy from the Osaka District 5 in the previous 2000 election. Affiliated to Kamei/Eto faction, Nakayama agreed to concede his candidacy in the district to Kōmeitō's Taniguchi Takayoshi and be listed on the regional PR list, leading to his defeat.

¹²⁶ 公明新聞 2003年10月4日 2頁

¹²⁷ Kōmeitō's nomination on LDP candidates: 1st (Oct. 16), 98 candidates; 2nd (October 24), 73 candidates; 3rd (October 27), 22 candidates; 4th (October 9), 3 candidates; 5th (October 30), 2 candidates, etc.

In other words, the Kōmeitō utilized the recommendation system as a means to balance the allocation of resources at the prefectural level and ‘repay’ Nakayama by swiftly promising to support him. At the same time, such Kōmeitō’s handlings of LDP candidates through the recommendation process elucidate how the party’s evaluation process continued to dwell upon the assessments of individual candidates as well as the local power balance at the prefectural level, rather than the overall framework for electoral cooperation drawn by the central leaderships. Particularly, the relatively low recommendation rates among LDP candidates who were running in the urban districts compared to national average suggest the inter-party cooperation between the two parties faced higher hurdles due to relatively high leverage of the Kōmeitō in metropolitan districts, which caused the conflicts of interests between the two parties.

Such tendency for the stagnant prefectural-level cooperation between the LDP and the Kōmeitō persevered in 2005 as well. Even though the recommendation rate from the Kōmeitō to LDP candidates reached 81.0% nationwide, it remained at 66.7% in the urban districts.¹²⁸ The notable difference regarding the Kōmeitō’s recommendations of LDP candidates in 2003 and 2005 was the party’s treatment of new candidates. As mentioned, only two of nine first-time candidates received recommendations from the Kōmeitō in 2003, while, in 2005, five of the six new candidates did. The only ‘new face’ who did not receive recommendation from the Kōmeitō was Kawajo Shika, who ran in Osaka District 2 as the *shikyaku* candidate¹²⁹ sent by Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro against Sato Akira, who left the LDP and ran as independent after voting against Koizumi’s postal privatization bill. While the detailed analysis of this district will be developed later in this chapter, Kawajo’s lack of recommendation from the Kōmeitō was indicative of the gap between the level of ‘cooperation’ at the central level and the prefectural/district level.

In a way, relatively low recommendation rates among the urban LDP candidates indicate the difficulty of electoral cooperation between the LDP and Kōmeitō where the latter’s leverage vis-à-vis the LDP is high. At the same time, it is also problematic to

¹²⁸ 20 of 30 LDP candidates received recommendations from the Kōmeitō in 2005, while nationally 235 of 290 LDP candidates received recommendations.

¹²⁹ *Shikyaku* literary means ‘assassin,’ and here it designate those candidates who were ‘sent’ to prevent ‘postal rebels’ from returning to the Diet.

assume that the ‘recommendation’ alone determines the success or failure of electoral cooperation between the two parties. In other words, the dependency level of LDP candidates on the Kōmeitō support is not entirely revealed simply by the recommendation from the Kōmeitō. Some candidates choose to receive Kōmeitō recommendation out of ‘courtesy’ or as a sign of good relationship, rather than desperate need for vote increase. On the other hand, the recommendation alone does not always guarantee vote mobilization from the Kōmeitō supporters, for their voting decisions are often made autonomously from those of the party leadership.¹³⁰ In other words, in order to evaluate the level of electoral cooperation between the two parties in each district, it is essential to estimate the vote mobilization that takes place in districts.

2) **Lopsided Development of Electoral Alliance**

While the degree of vote mobilization was limited between the LDP and the Kōmeitō in the 2000 general election, the LDP-Kōmeitō cooperation in terms of vote relocation significantly advanced after the 2003 general election. On average, the LDP/Kōmeitō candidates in thirty-four urban districts¹³¹ increased their vote gains by about 20% between 2000 and 2003.¹³² That is not to say, however, such deepening of electoral cooperation took place uniformly across districts; rather, the election results show that the electoral cooperation displayed lopsided development. As [Table IV-5] shows, the LDP/Kōmeitō candidates’ vote increases between the two elections showed significant fluctuations across districts.

One factor that advanced the level of cooperation at the district level was the changes in the structure of competition—the decrease of the effective number of

¹³⁰ Interview with Kōmeitō staffs on April 28, 2017. The interviewees mentioned that if 60% of Kōmeitō supporters were voting for LDP candidate, it is considered that the level of cooperation in the district is quite high. Another interviewee, a Sōka Gakkai member who is one of the support managers in a district in Tokyo, mentioned that he thinks only 50% of Kōmeitō/Sōka Gakkai members are voting regularly for the LDP district candidate (Interview on January 17, 2017).

¹³¹ Excluding two SMDs in Sakai City, as well as Kanagawa 18 (added in 2003) and Tokyo 14 (in 2000, neither Kōmeitō nor LDP fielded its candidate)

¹³² Total vote gains of LDP and Kōmeitō candidates in the 34 urban districts increased from 2,638,914 (2000) to 3,162,300 (2003).

candidates in each district. For example, the ‘maturing’ aspect of LDP-Kōmeitō electoral alliance at the district level in 2003 are found in those districts where the two parties had competed against one another in the previous 2000 general election, such as Tokyo 4 and 17. In Tokyo District 4, Morita Kensaku ran as independent against Kōmeitō’s Endo Kimihiko after the LDP leadership refused to give him official endorsement in 2000. In Tokyo District 17, Hirasawa Katsuei, refusing to step down, faced Kōmeitō’s Yamaguchi Natsuo as LDP’s endorsed candidate. Having lost in both districts, Kōmeitō did not field its own candidates in 2003 in those two districts. LDP fielded Nakanishi Kazuyoshi in Tokyo District 4 and Hirasawa was re-endorsed in District 17, and in both districts LDP underwent significant vote increases in the 2003 election—52.46% and 49.48%, respectively. Such vote increases, however, is best understood as result of changes in the structures of competitions, rather than the deepening inter-party cooperation at the prefectural level; neither of the two LDP candidates received recommendation from the Kōmeitō. Rather, the Kōmeitō’s withdrawals from the two districts induced two-party competition between the LDP and DPJ candidates in both districts, incentivizing the Kōmeitō voters to support LDP candidates, rather than the DPJ. Similarly, Kōmeitō’s Ueda Isamu (Kanagawa 6) also enjoyed significant absorption of conservative votes, increasing his vote counts by 57.68%—the highest among urban districts—and defeating DPJ’s Ikeda Motohisa by mere 536 votes.

Another factor that induced unequal development of the electoral alliance in terms of vote mobilization was regional characteristics. On average, the LDP/Kōmeitō increased their vote counts by 23.3% in twenty-five districts Tokyo and Kanagawa between 2000 and 2003, while the average vote increase of nine districts in Osaka and Hyogo remained at 13.0%. Simply put, the degree of vote increase between the 2000 and 2003 elections among LDP and Kōmeitō candidates was much higher in Kanto districts (Tokyo and Kanagawa) than it was in Kansai regions. However, such trend does not necessarily indicate less degree of electoral cooperation in Kansai region; it is quite the contrary. In other words, the electoral alliance in terms of candidate coordination as well as vote mobilization had matured earlier in Kansai districts than it did in Kanto areas.

Table IV-5 Vote counts for LDP/Komeito candidates (SMD, 2000 and 2003)

		2000 LH		2003 LH		vote increase (%)
		Vote Count (LDP / Kōmeitō)	#candidate	Vote Count (LDP / Kōmeitō)	#candidate	
1	Kanagawa 6*	52,175	5	82,268.7	5	57.68%
2	Tokyo 4	59,487	5	90,693	4	52.46%
3	Tokyo 17	95,606	4	142,916	3	49.48%
4	Kanagawa 3	61,016	5	91,207	5	49.48%
5	Tokyo 6	55,821	6	78,650	4	40.90%
6	Tokyo 9	81,912	4	112,868	4	37.79%
7	Osaka 4	63,290	5	87,187	3	37.76%
8	Kanagawa 1	81,245	5	111,730	4	37.52%
9	Tokyo 3	82,954	7	113,494	3	36.82%
10	Tokyo 15	52,892	6	69,164	4	30.76%
11	Kanagawa 5	70,343	3	91,513	3	30.10%
12	Tokyo 8	105,779	4	136,429	4	28.98%
13	Tokyo 11	90,483	4	113,477	3	25.41%
14	Tokyo 5	79,609	6	99,618	4	25.13%
15	Hyogo 3	50,036	5	61,263	3	22.44%
16	Kanagawa 10	94,183	4	114,766	3	21.85%
17	Kanagawa 2	95,960	3	115,495	3	20.36%
18	Osaka 5*	79,018	4	92,350	3	16.87%
19	Hyogo 1	62,166	4	71,587	4	15.15%
20	Tokyo 16	69,543	4	80,015	4	15.06%
21	Tokyo 10	71,318	4	81,979	4	14.95%
22	Tokyo 1	90,540	5	103,785	5	14.63%
23	Tokyo 2	81,923	5	91,926	3	12.21%
24	Kanagawa 7	85,340	6	93,857	3	9.98%
25	Tokyo 12*	90,208	4	98,700	3	9.41%
26	Tokyo 7	77,407	5	83,588	5	7.99%
27	Osaka 3*	90,605	3	97,552	3	7.67%
28	Osaka 2	90,470	4	96,470	3	6.63%
29	Osaka 6*	96,432	3	101,292	3	5.04%
30	Hyogo 2*	79,750	3	83,379	3	4.55%
31	Osaka 1	87,068	4	87,936	3	1.00%
32	Tokyo 13	90,567	4	88,254	3	-2.55%
33	Kanagawa 9	64,981	4	57,457	4	-11.58%
34	Kanagawa 8	58,787	6	39,434	4	-32.92%
Total/Average		2,638,914	4.5	3,162,300	3.6	19.83%

First, the average number of candidates per district in Kansai's nine districts in 2000 was 3.89, significantly lower than that of Kanto districts (4.72 candidates per district). In three districts—Osaka Districts 3, 6, and Hyogo District 2—the structure of competition was already consolidated around two-party competition by the time of the 2000 election, in which the top two candidates occupied about 80% of the total vote counts casted in each district.¹³³ In other words, the party leaderships successfully contained the inter-party conflict over candidate coordination from an early stage in Osaka and Hyogo, where there was little evidence of 'local disobedience.' Second, it is possible to observe the integration of support bases between LDP and Kōmeitō from an early stage in Kansai districts. The vote increases in Kansai districts were relatively small, and particularly for four Kōmeitō candidates who developed successful election campaigns in both 2000 and 2003 elections, their vote counts increased merely by 8.3%.¹³⁴ While such relatively insignificant vote increase imply that the conflation of support bases between LDP and Kōmeitō in those districts had taken place since the early phase of electoral alliance, it is also indicative of the 'limitation' of the two parties' vote-cultivating capabilities in Kansai districts. As it will be illuminated in the following section, such 'limitation' of the two-party alliance became exposed in 2009 under the influence of so-called 'floating voters.'

Overall, the lopsided development of the electoral alliance at district level was induced by two major factors: divergent structures of competition and regional characteristics. First, the regional variation became evident in the gaps in the degree of successful candidate coordination in Kanto and Kansai regions. While in Kansai, the two-party competition between LDP/Kōmeitō and the DPJ/JCP became consolidated in the 2000 election, the effect of the new electoral system that induces two-party competition did not take root in Kanto districts until 2003. Second, the increase in the vote counts among LDP candidates particularly in Kanto region in the 2003 election was

¹³³ In the 2000 general election, the combined vote shares of the two candidates (who ended up first and second places) were 83.8% in Osaka 3, 83.8% in Osaka 6, and 79.5% in Hyogo 2.

¹³⁴ The total vote counts of Kōmeitō candidates in Osaka Districts 3, 5 and 6 and Hyogo 2, were 345,805 in 2000 and 374,573 in 2003.

induced by decreasing number of conservative candidates, which accelerated due to the dissolution of Liberal Party and its merge with the DPJ shortly before the 2003 election.¹³⁵ Another factor that stimulated the voter alignment within LDP-Kōmeitō alliance was the withdrawal of Kōmeitō and Kaikaku Kurabu¹³⁶ candidates from single-member competitions. For example, similar to the case of Tokyo District 17, in Kanagawa District 3, Nishikawa Tomoo's withdrawal in the 2003 election, who was a member of Kakukaku Kurabu and had earned more than 40,000 votes in 2000, seems to have induced significant vote increase for LDP candidate Okonogi Hachiro. On the other hand, however, LDP candidates who faced incumbent opponents with tenacious support organizations had much harder time mustering non-LDP votes. In Tokyo District 2, LDP's Yosano Kaoru faced Kaieda Banri, while in Tokyo District 7 Matsumoto Fumiaki challenged DPJ's Nagatsuma Akira. The vote increases of both LDP candidates remained insignificant, leading to their electoral defeats. The case of Kamoshita Ichiro in Tokyo District 13 was even characterized by unrelenting personal discord in the district. Kamoshita, who first ran in the district as NFP candidate in the 1996 election, joined the LDP in December 1997. Such eyebrow-raising side-switching not only made Kamoshita run without nomination from the Kōmeitō in both 2000 and 2003 elections, but he also became one of few LDP candidates whose vote gains decreased between the two elections.

In other words, while the overall vote increase among LDP candidates as well as the successful elections of all Kōmeitō candidates suggest that the LDP-Kōmeitō electoral alliance further advanced in the 2003 general election, such augmentation of electoral cooperation demonstrated lopsided development, rather than a uniform progress. The reason for such regional as well as district-level variations can be explained by the differing structures of competitions, quality of constituting candidates, and also the residue of past personal relations. Conversely, such 'contingent' nature of electoral alliance suggests the susceptibility of the two-party cooperation to district/candidate-

¹³⁵ Cases like districts Kanagawa 1, 3, 6, 7, as well as Tokyo 5, 6, 9, 11

¹³⁶ Splinter party that emerged after the dissolution of NFP; formed inter-parliamentary kaiha with Kōmeitō in 1998.

specific electoral environments.

3) **Cold-Shouldered Kōmeitō**

Of all the unique footprints Koizumi Junichiro left behind his tenure as prime minister, perhaps nothing was more theatrical or memorable than the ‘postal dissolution’ and the following ‘landslide victory’ of the LDP in the 2005 general election. Characterized by high turnout rate reaching 67.51%, the 2005 general election brought in eight million ‘floating voters’ who essentially crowned PM Koizumi and his backers with much-needed parliamentary security in the Lower House. The LDP won 296 of 480 seats, and combined with Kōmeitō’s 31 seats, the coalition government ended up occupying 68% of Lower House ([Figure IV-4]). The competition rate per district further declined from 3.42 (2003) to 3.30 (2005), inducing further consolidation of two-party system. Particularly, the LDP-Kōmeitō electoral alliance produced almost perfect result in urban districts; of thirty-six single-member districts in Tokyo, Kanagawa, Osaka, and Hyogo, the two parties secured thirty-five, losing only one district in Kanagawa. Between 2003 and 2005, the vote gains of LDP/Kōmeitō candidates in the urban districts increased by 40.53%. The question, then, is whether such exceptional electoral victory was accompanied by the advancement of the LDP-Kōmeitō electoral alliance, or it was simply the floating voters that mattered in the advancement of the LDP.

The answer to that question depends on the perspective. Critics have emphasized the role of ‘floating voters’ (*fudō hyō*) as the critical factor that brought about new trends to Japan’s electoral competition in the 2005 election (Tanaka 2009). Simply put, they claimed that the old-style election campaigning characterized by personal vote cultivation was finally replaced with policy-based inter-party competition in a very tangible form, after more than a decade had passed since the passing of electoral system reform. While scholars had for some time pointed out the growing significance of nonpartisan voters in determining the electoral result, it was only in the 2005 election when such power of unattached voters was truly exercised. Studies suggest that it was the overwhelming support of the ‘floating voters’ for the LDP that brought the landslide victory to Koizumi (Kono 2009). On the other hand, to uncover the reality of LDP-

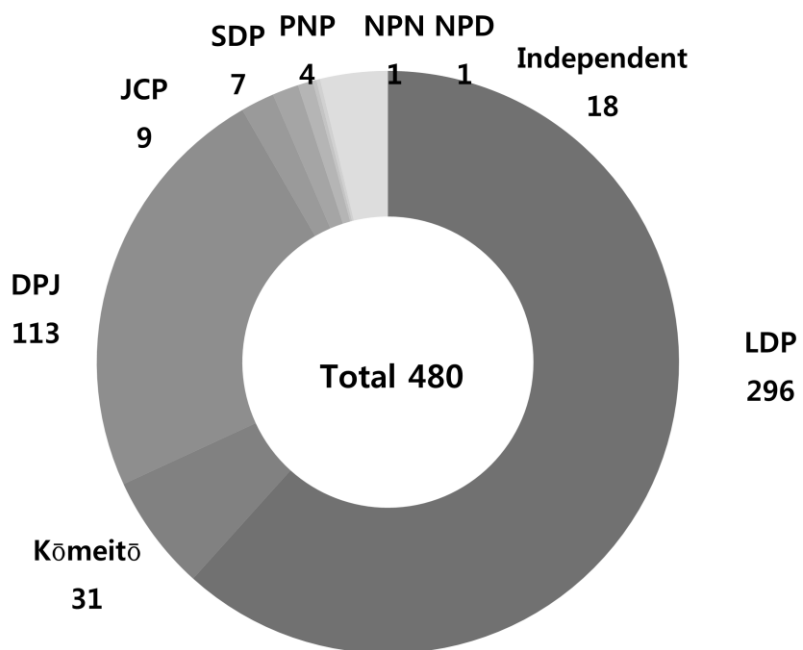


Figure IV-4 Result of 2005 Lower House Election

Kōmeitō alliance buried under the performance of nonpartisan voters, it is necessary to subtract the number of ‘new voters’—those who did not vote in 2003 but voted in 2005—from the total vote gains of LDP/Kōmeitō candidate in each district, and compare it to the candidate’s vote gain in the previous election. [Table IV-6] shows the vote increase of LDP/Kōmeitō candidates in urban districts between 2003 and 2005 general elections, after subtracting 80% of increased number of voters in each district from the vote gains of LDP/Kōmeitō candidate in the 2005 election.¹³⁷ In other words, it shows the vote increases of LDP/Kōmeitō candidates in urban districts without the effect of swing voters between 2003 and 2005.

As it was also the case during the 2003 election, it is possible to observe various degrees of vote mobilizations across districts. First, as it was the case for the 2003 election, the significant increases of vote counts among LDP candidates in some districts, including Tokyo Districts 14, 15, 16, and Kanagawa District 18, were caused by the delayed integration of conservative camp. For example, Kōmeitō did not support Matsushima Midori (Tokyo District 14) in the previous election, and instead gave nomination to Nishikawa Taichiro from New Conservative Party in 2003, with whom the Kōmeitō had once shared political journey during the NFP period. Similarly, in Tokyo District 16, Kōmeitō gave nomination to Shimamura Yoshinobu for the first time in 2005, for the party had supported non-affiliated Utagawa Yoshio in the 2000 election against Shimamura, who was a vocal opponent of LDP-Kōmeitō alliance in its initial phase, and such personal hostility resonated even in the 2003 election.¹³⁸ Yet in 2005, Utagawa’s withdrawal not only reduced the number of candidates in the district, but also seemed to have completed the integration of conservative votes, inducing significant vote increase of the candidate. Yamagiwa Daishiro, who ran for the second time in Kanagawa

¹³⁷ This calculation assumes that 80% of ‘new voters’ (who voted in 2005 but not in 2003) voted for LDP/Kōmeitō candidates, based on Tanaka (2009)’s analysis that about 6.5 million voters among 8 million new voters voted in favor for Prime Minister Koizumi (10).

¹³⁸ 朝日新聞 2003年11月10日、11ページ。Shimamura is said to have changed his attitude toward the Kōmeitō completely in 2003, after losing to Utagawa in 2000 who had mustered support from the Kōmeitō in defeating him. The Kōmeitō did not officially support Shimamura in 2003, but instead took on ‘autonomous voting,’ which the local Kōmeitō officials called it “the best support we can give at this point.”

Table IV-6 Vote increase (%) of LDP/Kōmeitō candidates between 2003 and 2005 general elections in urban districts without ‘floating votes’

District	Candidate (LDP/Kōmeitō)	Vote increase (%)	RC ¹³⁹ (2003)	RC (2005)	NEW
Tokyo 16	Shimamura Yoshinobu	51.24%	0	1	
Tokyo 14	Matsushita Midori	49.75%	0	1	
Kanagawa 18	Yamagiwa Daishiro	42.96%	0	0	
Tokyo 15	Kimura Ben	42.46%	1	1	
Tokyo 6	Ochi Takao	30.38%	1	1	
Kanagawa 5	Sakai Manabu	23.42%	0	1	
Kanagawa 6	Ueda Isamu	23.36%	0	0	
Tokyo 7	Matsumoto Bunmei	23.35%	1	1	
Tokyo 5	Kosugi Takashi	19.83%	1	1	
Tokyo 13	Kamoshita Ichiro	16.83%	1	1	
Tokyo 1	Yosano Kaoru	15.31%	1	1	
Kanagawa 1	Matsumoto Jun	14.49%	0	0	
Kanagawa 7	Suzuki Tsuneo	14.44%	0	0	
Hyogo 3	Seki Yoshihiro	12.92%	1	1	N
Kanagawa 9	Yamauchi Koichi	10.61%	0	1	N
Tokyo 2	Fukaya Takashi	10.03%	1	1	
Kanagawa 2	Suga Yoshihide	9.84%	0	0	
Tokyo 9	Sugawara Isshu	9.58%	1	1	
Osaka 4	Nakayama Yasuhide	9.51%	1	1	
Kanagawa 3	Okonogi Hachiro	9.20%	0	0	
Kanagawa 10	Tanaka Kazunori	8.58%	0	0	
Tokyo 3	Ishihara Hirotaka	6.16%	0	0	
Tokyo 11	Shimomura Hakubun	5.76%	1	1	
Tokyo 4	Taira Masaaki	1.53%	0	1	N
Kanagawa 8	Fukuda Mineyuki	1.22%	0	1	N
Hyogo 2	Akaba Kazuyoshi	0.82%	0	0	
Tokyo 10	Koike Yuriko	-0.16%	1	1	
Tokyo 8	Ishihara Nobuteru	-1.53%	0	0	
Osaka 1	Chuma Koki	-2.21%	1	1	
Osaka 5	Taniguchi Takayoshi	-2.33%	0	0	
Tokyo 17	Hirasawa Katsuei	-3.38%	0	0	
Osaka 3	Tabata Masahiro	-4.05%	0	0	
Osaka 6	Fukushima Yutaka	-4.52%	0	0	
Hyogo 1	Moriyama Masahito	-8.34%	1	1	N
Tokyo 12	Ota Akihiro	-11.74%	0	0	
Osaka 2	Kawajo Shika	-51.97%	1	0	N

¹³⁹ RC indicates ‘Recommendation’

District 18, was able to increase his vote gains significantly due to the reduced number of candidates in the district, which declined from 7 in 2003 to 3 in 2005.¹⁴⁰

Aside from the continuous trend for integration among conservative votes, another common characteristic found between the 2003 and 2005 elections was the limited expansion of Kōmeitō support base. First, the vote gains of all five Kōmeitō district candidates without the effect of ‘floating voters’ showed no sign of significant increase. The vote gains of Ota Akihiro (Tokyo 12) suggest that his vote counts would have declined by about 12% between 2003 and 2005, if not for the floating voters. Second, despite the higher turnout rate in 2005, the Kōmeitō hardly increased its vote gains in PR in urban regions. [Table IV-7] shows the two parties’ vote gains in equivalent urban PR tiers in 2003 and 2005 elections. While the LDP’s PR vote gains showed significant increase of 49.3% in the urban areas, Kōmeitō’s ‘party votes’ remained almost the same in the two elections. Such rigidity of Kōmeitō’s party votes indicates that the Kōmeitō was completely excluded from the benefit of “Koizumi effect” in the 2005 election, elucidating the limitation of Kōmeitō’s vote expansion.

Such contrasting voting behaviors among the ‘swing voters’ vis-à-vis LDP and Kōmeitō candidates indicate that support for the LDP among the swing voters do not necessarily lead to their support for the coalition partner. And such perceptual segregation of LDP and the Kōmeitō was also found among the LDP supporters as well. Comparison of two districts in Tokyo helps highlight the gap in the levels of supporter coherence between LDP and Kōmeitō candidates. Koike Yuriko, who had joined the LDP in 2000 and had run exclusively in PR, announced her candidacy in Tokyo 10 as one of Koizumi’s *shikyaku* against three-time winner of the district Kobayashi Kōki, who voted against Koizumi’s postal reform bill. On the other hand, in Tokyo 12, known as the ‘symbol’ of LDP-Kōmeitō electoral cooperation in Tokyo, Kōmeitō’s star politician Ota Akihiro raised his hand, after LDP’s Yashiro Eita from the district also voted against Koizumi’s signature legislation.¹⁴¹ Yashiro recanted his withdrawal from the district after

¹⁴⁰ Kanagawa 18 was newly installed in 2003, which caused the upsurge of the number of candidates in the first general election.

¹⁴¹ Ota and Yashiro had an agreement to run alternatively, so-called Costa Rican agreement. In 2005, it was Yashiro’s turn if he had not voted against postal reform.

Table IV-7 LDP and Kōmeitō's Vote Gains in PR in Urban Districts (2003 and 2005 Lower House)

	LDP			Kōmeitō		
	2003 PR	2005 PR	Increase (%)	2003 PR	2005 PR	Increase (%)
Tokyo	1,294,136	1,850,364	43.0%	545,723	553,470	1.4%
Kanagawa	716,588	1121,663	56.5%	286,479	294,145	2.7%
Osaka	331,384	510,664	54.1%	279,695	283,045	1.2%
Hyogo	175,255	275,315	57.1%	106,726	106,420	-0.3%
TOTAL	2,517,363	3,758,006	49.3%	1,218,623	1,237,080	1.5%

Table IV-8 Exit polls on voting decisions after 2005 general election

Supporting party	Tokyo 10		Tokyo 12	
	Koike Yuriko (LDP)		Ota Akihiro (Kōmeitō)	
LDP	75%		59%	
Kōmeitō	94%		93%	
Nonpartisan	46%		28%	

Source: Yomiuri Shimbun, 2005.09.12 pp. 7

the LDP leadership refused to list him at the top of regional PR list and decided to run as independent. LDP leadership, afraid that Yashiro's candidacy would upset the Kōmeitō supporters and stagnate electoral cooperation in other districts in Tokyo, promised the party's fullest cooperation for Ota, even setting up the unprecedented "special task force" to support the Kōmeitō candidate.¹⁴² Both Koike and Ota ran against (former) LDP members with solid experiences of running in the respective districts, and the biggest challenge for them was to prevent the LDP supporters' votes from slipping out from their hands.

The result was rather contrasting. [Table IV-8] shows the exit polls of Tokyo 10 and 12 on the voting decisions among LDP/Kōmeitō supporters as well as nonpartisan voters. The numbers show, first and foremost, the unwavering loyalty of the Kōmeitō voters to the LDP-Kōmeitō framework; in other words, they do not discriminate between LDP and Kōmeitō candidates and showed the same level of support to both candidates. Second, in contrast to the Kōmeitō supporters, the LDP supporters display less coherence in their voting decisions. The same survey showed that 22% of LDP supporters voted for Yashiro in Tokyo 12, while 16% voted for Kobayashi in Tokyo 10. Third, the nonpartisan voters are less inclined to vote for the Kōmeitō candidate than for the LDP candidate. In the same exit poll, while 46% of nonpartisan voters voted for Koike, only 28% did for Ota. In Tokyo 12, DPJ candidate Fujita Yukihi earned the highest support from the nonpartisans by consolidating 36% of their votes, which were even higher than Ota (28%) or Yashiro (23%). Simply put, while the Kōmeitō supporters show high level of coherence in supporting not only its own candidates but also the LDP's, the LDP supporters show the tendency to discriminate Kōmeitō candidate against their own. Even though Ota Akihiro managed to mobilize 60% of LDP votes, it is still noteworthy that 22% continued to support Yashiro Eita, despite his lack of party affiliation. Further, the poll shows lower support from nonpartisan voters for the Kōmeitō candidate, highlighting the different levels of endorsement toward the two parties.

According to the exit poll conducted by Yomiuri Shimbun, in the 2005 election, 78% of Kōmeitō voters voted for LDP district candidates nationwide, while 68% of LDP

¹⁴² 朝日新聞 2005年8月29日、1頁。

supporters voted for Kōmeitō candidates in nine districts where Kōmeitō fielded its candidates.¹⁴³ Such numbers seem to suggest that the LDP and the Kōmeitō succeeded in integrating most of their supporters into one consolidated support base. Yet such ‘development’ not only took place unequally across districts, but it is also critical to point out that the Kōmeitō’s benefits remained extremely small, highlighting the disengaged nature of supporter mobilizations between the two coalition partners.

Further, the electoral success in the 2005 election was built on the momentum of Koizumi’s direction of political drama, and most of all by the incited floating voters. In other words, such astonishing electoral success was subservient to the overall political performance of the Koizumi cabinet as well as the LDP, and it did not mean that the political momentum was able to completely destroy the existing political foundations altogether. The case of Osaka District 2 is quite symbolic of the persistence of existing social relations in determining the levels of cooperation. Osaka District 2 was (and still is) a well-known *jiban* of Sato Akira, who ‘inherited’ his father’s *kōenkai* since the 2000 election. Having opposed to Koizumi’s postal reform, Sato came to face ‘*shikyaku*’ candidate Kawajo Shika, and ran as an independent candidate in 2005. Sandwiched between LDP’s central leadership and local power game, the Kōmeitō decided to take on autonomous voting, making Kawajo one of two LDP candidates in nineteen Osaka districts who ran without nomination from the Kōmeitō. Even though she won against Sato by mere 2,500 votes, Kawajo was only able to mobilize 58% of combined support base of LDP and Kōmeitō.¹⁴⁴ Though its degree remains unclear, the Kōmeitō voters seem to have been divided between Sato and Kawajo. In other words, As Kanzaki Takenori, then the president of Kōmeitō, implied in an interview, it is the diversity and flexibility of local logics that breed various degrees of electoral cooperation:

(In supporting the opponents of postal privatization) ... I would hope that all Kōmeitō organization support LDP-endorsed candidates. But I also understand that the personal relationships that have been cultivated at the local level cannot simply be overlooked. Kōmeitō will not offer recommendations to the opposing candidates, but we cannot

¹⁴³ 読売新聞 9月13日、6頁。

¹⁴⁴ Kawajo’s vote gain was 73,953, while the combined number of LDP and Kōmeitō’s PR votes in Osaka 2 in 2005 was 127,413 (LDP 80,528; Kōmeitō 46,885).

help it if de facto electoral cooperation took place in some districts.¹⁴⁵

3. Challenged Alliance Despite Consolidated Partnership (2009)

The unequal development of electoral alliance between 2000 and 2005 across districts suggests that the voter alignments among LDP and Kōmeitō supporters were induced by the shifts in the structures of competition within each district. During that process, while the ‘integration’ of electoral resources intensified at the leadership level, as the Kōmeitō’s stagnation in the 2005 election elucidated, perceptual discriminations vis-à-vis LDP and Kōmeitō remained pervasive particularly among the ‘swing voters.’ Starting in 2009, however, the resource-sharing between the two parties grew intertwined and the Kōmeitō’s support bases became increasingly susceptible to the reputation of its coalition partner.

The 2009 general election held on August 30, in which the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) became the first political party in the history of postwar Japan to single-handedly overturn the LDP rule, was a historic moment that symbolized the end of LDP dominance and realized the ‘alteration of power.’ This “Bloodless Revolution,”¹⁴⁶ as one critic called it, gave DPJ 308 seats in the Lower House, and the party won 221 of 271 single-member districts ([Figure IV-5]). It is not difficult to imagine the depth of devastation the LDP and Kōmeitō came to face as coalition partners, whose ‘amicable’ relationship rested almost solely on the electoral legitimacy. The prelude to regime change began two years earlier when the LDP-Kōmeitō failed to secure a simple majority in the 2007 Upper House election. Soon after Koizumi stepped down, Abe Shinzo, the newly elected party president, became buried under numerous political crises caused by such issues as missing pension records, successive resigning of Defense Minister Kyūma Fumio after problematic remarks on atomic bombings and Minister of State Sata Genichiro for the alleged material misstatement of political funds, and most of all, the issue of reinstitution of ‘postal rebels’ to the LDP in the anticipation of upcoming

¹⁴⁵ 朝日新聞 2005年8月25日、4頁。Interview with President of Kōmeitō Kanzaki Takenori

¹⁴⁶ Park Cheol-Hee. 2009. “Bloodless Revolution: How the DPJ’s Win Will Change Japan.” *Global Asia*: Vol. 4 (4).

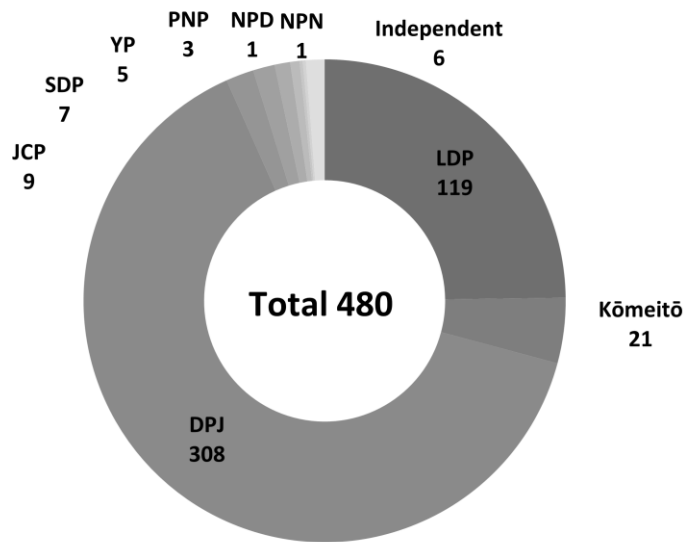


Figure IV-5 Result of 2009 Lower House Election

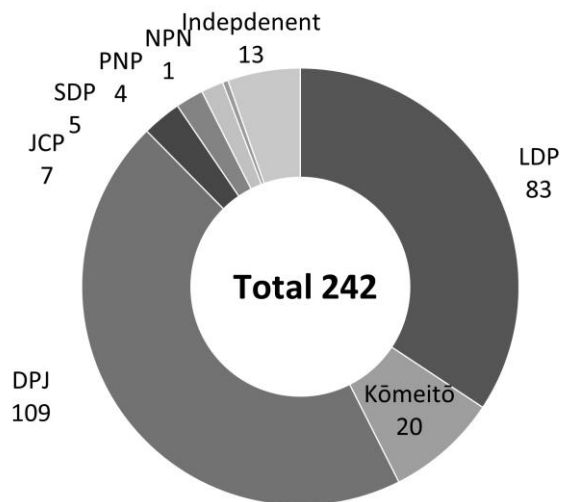


Figure IV-6 Result of 2007 Upper House Election

Upper House election. Amid political crisis, the cabinet's relationship with the Kōmeitō was also off to a shaky start; Kōmeitō grew uneasy as PM Abe showed willingness to push forward controversial, right-wing agendas such as constitutional reform and visit to Yasukuni Shrine.¹⁴⁷ Furthermore, as the Upper House election drew near, the inter-party dissonance heightened over the issues of electoral cooperation. As the cabinet approval rating continued to decline and the LDP leadership as well as the prospective candidates began losing confidence, discord started to erupt in such prefectures as Saitama, Aichi, Fukuoka, and Ibaragi, where the race for vote cultivation spilled over to the “territorial battles” between the LDP and the Kōmeitō.¹⁴⁸

The result, as anticipated, hit the coalition partners hard (**Figure IV-6**). Not only did the LDP-Kōmeitō alliance create the ‘twisted Diet,’ but LDP conceded its position as the largest party in the Upper House to the DPJ for the first time since 1955. Kōmeitō was no exception; the party's PR votes decreased by 10% from the 2004 election, and even more shocking was the electoral defeats of three district candidates who ran in Aichi, Kanagawa, and Saitama districts, reducing the total seat share in the Upper House from 24 to 20. Imai and Kabashima (2008) points out that the most striking aspect of the 2007 Upper House election was the LDP's overwhelming loss in the single-seat constituencies; of twenty-nine single-seat constituencies, LDP only won six, losing twenty-three against DPJ candidates. Their findings suggest that the voters' disapproval of Koizumi and Abe administrations' structural reform changed their voting behaviors and increased the DPJ's vote gains in those districts (292). Even more significant was the fact that the LDP was unable to secure most of the single-seat constituencies, despite the fact these districts represented LDP's traditional power bases located in rural regions of Japan. After the 2007 UH election, the LDP and Kōmeitō came to face perhaps the worst crisis since the establishment of the two-party coalition. In the aftermath of global financial crisis in 2008, Prime Minister Aso Taro decided to postpone the dissolution of the Diet, overlooking Kōmeitō's request not to have general election close to the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly election scheduled to be held in July 2009. The crisis of the two-

¹⁴⁷ 朝日新聞 2006年9月26日、4頁。

¹⁴⁸ 朝日新聞 5月23日 4頁、6月5日27頁、6月15日30頁、6月26日34頁 等参照。

party coalition did not end there. On August 30, 2009, the DPJ became the first political party in Japan's postwar history to single-handedly overturn the LDP's dominance in the Lower House. Scholars characterized that this 'regime change' was made possible by the same pool of floating voters who gave Koizumi's LDP the landslide victory four years before (Kono 2009; Taniguchi et al. 2009).

While the high turnout rate (69.28%) as well as the effect of 'swing voters' that induced 'landslide victory' of the DPJ may suggest that the only difference between the two elections held in 2005 and 2009 were the voting behaviors of the 'floating voters,' in reality, there were notable differences between the two elections in terms of structure of competition, as well as the LDP-Kōmeitō electoral alliance. First, the 2009 election was characterized by opposition fragmentation, which was particularly salient in urban districts. The competition rate slightly increased nationwide from 3.30 in 2005 to 3.80 in 2009, despite the fact that the JCP, who had been known to field its candidate in every district, only fielded 152 candidates in 300 single-member districts due to pre-electoral coordination with the DPJ and other progressive parties. Particularly, the competition rate in the thirty-eight urban districts was much higher than the national average, marking 4.37. Such increase in the competition rate was triggered by the births of splinter parties, such as People's New Party (*Kokumin Shintō*) and Your Party (*Minnano tō*), who fielded their candidates mostly in urban districts. Second, despite the pre-electoral dissonance between the two parties, the levels of electoral cooperation between the LDP and Kōmeitō reached its peak, both in terms of prefectural-level negotiation and the vote mobilization. Kōmeitō's nomination rate of LDP's 289 candidates hit the highest record of 93.8%. In thirty-eight urban districts, only two candidates did not receive nomination from the Kōmeitō—Hirasawa Katsuei (Tokyo 17) and Kawajo Shika (Osaka 2). Put another way, the devastating loss of LDP-Kōmeitō alliance was not caused by the absence of cooperation—rather, they lost *despite* the high level of cooperation.

At the district level, the LDP and Kōmeitō demonstrated the existence of stable support bases as well. While the two parties' vote gains in PR showed slight decline from the 2003 election in the urban districts ([**Table IV-9**]), in single-member districts, both parties increased their vote gains from the 2003 standards ([**Table IV-10**): LDP's vote

Table IV-9 PR vote counts in 36 urban districts [Increase (%) from 2003]

	2003 (43rd)	2005 (44th)	2009 (45th)
LDP	2,472,281	3,684,594 [+49.0%]	2,319,901 [-6.2%]
Kōmeitō	1,199,448	1,216,788 [+1.4%]	1,084,705 [-9.6%]

Table IV-10 SMD vote counts in 36 urban districts

	2003 (43rd)	2005 (44th)	2009 (45th)
LDP	2,731,176	3,915,187 [+43.4%]	2,997,549 [+9.8%]
Kōmeitō	555,542	703,689 [+26.6%]	594,183 [+7.0%]

Table IV-11 Kōmeitō candidate's vote gains and PR vote counts by LDP and Kōmeitō in corresponding districts (2003&2009)

	2003LH			2009LH		
	SMD	PR (LDP+Kōmeitō)	SMD/PR	SMD	PR (LDP+Kōmeitō)	SMD/PR
TOKYO 12	98700	113055	87.3%	108679	106677	101.9%
KANAGAWA 6	82268.7	104726	78.6%	94941	90605	104.8%
OSAKA 3	97552	110928	87.9%	97121	98820	98.3%
OSAKA 5	82350	104326	78.9%	97604	97449	100.2%
OSAKA 6	101292	108260	93.6%	107336	102371	104.9%
HYOGO 2	83379	91057	91.6%	88502	83118	106.5%
TOTAL	545541.7	632352	86.3%	594183	579040	102.6%

gains in thirty districts increased by 9.8%, while that of Kōmeitō's also rose by 7.0% in six districts. What is notable is Kōmeitō's vote gains in PR in 2009; the Kōmeitō's 'party votes' declined by 9.6% since 2003. As discussed in Chapter II, Kōmeitō's PR vote gains in the urban districts in 2003 represented the number of 'pure Kōmeitō supporters,' for the differences in vote gains between municipal elections and the PR was less than 3% in 2003.¹⁴⁹ Kōmeitō's 9.6% decline of PR votes in the 2009 general election, therefore, suggests that Kōmeitō failed to incorporate some of those 'pure Kōmeitō votes' in 2009—hinting the beginning of the slow erosion of the Kōmeitō's iron support base.

Yet in terms of inter-party electoral cooperation, the level of supporter mobilization reached one of the highest points for both sides: Even though all Kōmeitō district candidates lost the election, it was not because they were unable to acquire help from the LDP supporters. [Table IV-11] compares the vote counts of Kōmeitō's district candidates in six urban districts in 2003 and 2009, along with the aggregate number of LDP and Kōmeitō's PR vote counts in each of the corresponding districts. In 2003, 86.3% of LDP and Kōmeitō's 'party votes' were casted to the Kōmeitō candidates, while in 2009, the Kōmeitō candidates managed to mobilize almost the same scale of supporters in the districts. Even though the two parties' decline of absolute vote gains in PR may explain how only 'pure supporters' of LDP and Kōmeitō voted for the two parties both in PR and SMDs, it is still possible to observe the 'complete conflation' of LDP and Kōmeitō support bases in those districts. Such progress of vote mobilization among the Kōmeitō candidates is indicative of two characteristics of the Kōmeitō's vote mobilization in single-member districts. First, the supporter mobilization in single-member districts remained relatively immune to the external political crisis, and their losses were caused not by the failure of electoral cooperation, but by the increased number of voters (i.e. high turnout rate) that rushed to 'punish' the coalition government. In other words, their vote gains in the 2009 election may suggest the scale of personal

¹⁴⁹ See [Table III-9] for the comparison of Kōmeitō's vote gains in national and local elections.

support base each Kōmeitō candidate can cultivate. Second, considering the high level of ‘mutual recommendations’ between the two parties, the sense of crisis at the time of the 2009 election induced further integration of LDP-Kōmeitō alliance, rather than driving the wedge between the two parties. In other words, the political crisis became a catalyst that drove further advancement of the electoral alliance.

Same tendency was found for the thirty-one LDP candidates who ran in the urban districts as well; even though only four candidates— Ishihara Nobuaki (Tokyo 8), Shimomura Hakubun (Tokyo 11), Hirasawa Katsuei (Tokyo 17), and Suga Yoshihide (Kanagawa 2)—won the single-member competitions, in most cases, the electoral losses were not caused by the lack of electoral cooperation from the Kōmeitō, but by the behaviors of floating voters. First of all, just like Kōmeitō candidates, most LDP candidates expanded their vote gains between 2003 and 2009 elections. Among thirty-one districts, LDP decreased its vote counts in only six of them.¹⁵⁰ The party’s overall vote gains between 2003 and 2009 in thirty single-member districts showed slight increase of 4.8%.¹⁵¹ While all LDP candidates in urban districts earned less number of votes in 2009 than they did in 2005, when compared to the results of 2003 election, the LDP’s absolute vote gains increased in most districts. Second, the ratio of LDP candidates’ vote gains in thirty-one single-member districts to aggregate PR vote counts of LDP and Kōmeitō exceed 1, and LDP candidates mobilized 104.9 % of aggregate vote gains in PR.¹⁵² It indicates that the LDP candidates, like Kōmeitō counterparts, managed to prevent ‘party votes’ from spilling over to other conservative candidates. Put another way, these votes represent relatively unyielding pool of voters who remained loyal to the LDP-Kōmeitō alliance amid political crises.

On the other hand, even though such voter coherence suggests high level of integration between LDP and Kōmeitō support bases, there was also an exception to what is seemingly an advancing two-party electoral alliance. Kawajo Shika, an LDP-endorsed

¹⁵⁰ Tokyo 7 (-4.90%), Tokyo 17 (-3.18%), Kanagawa 3 (-1.81%), Kanagawa 9 (-16.61%), Osaka 1 (-12.26%), Osaka 2 (-172.38%)

¹⁵¹ LDP’s vote gains in thirty urban districts were 3,286,718 in 2003 and 3,741,669 in 2009.

¹⁵² Total number of votes LDP candidates earned in thirty-one urban SMDs (including Osaka D17) was 3,160,207, while aggregate vote gains of LDP and Kōmeitō in PR was 3,018,091.

candidate in Osaka 2, who had defeated the ‘postal rebel’ Sato Akira in the previous election, once again faced Sato who ran as an independent candidate. As mentioned in the previous section, Kawajo defeated Sato by 2,500 votes in 2005, but four years later she proved to have gained little support from the floating voters as well as from the LDP and Kōmeitō voters. [Table IV-12] shows the results of Osaka 2 district from the 2003 to 2009 general elections. Having run as an NFP candidate in 1996, Sato’s relationship with the Kōmeitō remained amicable since the early stage. Even though he did not receive LDP’s party endorsement in 2005, he was able to mobilize as many as 74,000 votes in 2005, and the number represents the scale of his impregnable personal support base. Kawajo’s support base, on the other hand, proved far less stable; she lost 52% of the votes between 2005 and 2009. She lost 38,536 votes in 2009, most of which seemed to have been casted for the DPJ candidate Hagihara Hitoshi, who earned 38,998 more votes in 2009 than he did in 2005. Such drastic movement of votes from LDP to DPJ candidates between the two elections suggests that Kawajo’s election in 2005 was made

Table IV-12 Results of Osaka 2 (43rd-45th)

	CANDIDATE	PARTY AFFILIATION	VOTE COUNTS	VOTE SHARE (%)
43RD (2003) 56.14%	Sato Akira	LDP	96,470	50.8%
	Iwanami Kaoru	DPJ	56,652	29.8%
	Ishii Ikuko	JCP	36,706	19.3%
44TH (2005) 66.04%	Kawajo Shika	LDP	73,953	32.8%
	Sato Akira	Independent	71,423	31.7%
	Hagihara Hitoshi	DPJ	52,954	23.5%
	Yoshinaga Tomoyuki	JCP	27,300	12.1%
45TH (2009) 66.51%	Hagihara Hitoshi	DPJ	91,952	40.1%
	Sato Akira	Independent	72,888	31.8%
	Kawajo Shika	LDP	35,417	15.5%
	Toshinaga Tomoyuki	JCP	23,629	10.3%
	Fukada Toshiko	HRP	5,285	2.3%

possible by the ‘floating votes,’ which consisted more than half of her total vote gains in 2005. At the same time, if we consider those who voted for Sato in 2003 but did not in 2005 as ‘pure LDP voters,’ for they valued ‘party label’ over ‘personal label,’ difference of Sato’s absolute vote gains between 2003 and 2005, namely 25,047 votes, would represent the number of ‘pure LDP voters’ in the district. Assuming that this pool of voters also voted for Kawajo in 2009, and subtracting the number from the candidate’s total vote gain (35,417), then it is possible to calculate that 10,370 non-LDP voters, most likely to be the Kōmeitō voters, voted for Kawajo in 2009. Given that Kōmeitō’s vote gains in the corresponding PR in 2009 was 42,297, about only one-fourth of Kōmeitō voters supported Kawajo.

Needless to say, such calculations rest largely on informed assumptions and it is difficult to measure exactly how much ‘electoral mobilization’ took place in a specific district. Yet, at least the case of Osaka District 2 implied that, in some districts, Kōmeitō voters do not always support the candidates based on party label; instead, personal relations on the district level, as well as the duration of cooperative experiences, seem to have continuous influence on the levels of electoral cooperation that takes place in each district. Put another way, the fact that most LDP/Kōmeitō candidates in the urban districts were multiple-time runners and have accumulated local experiences between the two parties may explain the development of LDP-Kōmeitō alliance, and why there seem to exist the gaps in the levels of cooperation across districts and elections. Further, Sato’s case suggests that it was not the centrally-coordinated cooperation framework, but rather the resilience of the locally-accumulated political resources between the each of LDP candidates and Kōmeitō’s organized support that enabled the two-party relationship to sustain in time of great crises.

Perhaps the most critical consequence brought about by the devastating loss of the 2009 general election was the realization that the LDP-Kōmeitō alliance may no longer be enough to thwart the tide of ‘conservative voters’ that were rising as new electoral challenges in urban regions. That the two parties did engage in a full-fledged cooperation and still defeated simply implied that, regardless of the ‘efficacy’ of cooperation, both parties faced the necessity of supplementing the electoral resources by widening the pool

of supporters. The Kōmeitō's first move was to reconstruct the lost relationship with the Democratic Party of Japan. The shock of losing all district candidates even led to the surfacing of 'retreat plan' from the single-member district competitions and simultaneous suspension of all support activities for LDP candidates, which the Sōka Gakkai and its members considered extremely burdensome and, this time, even inefficient. Yet after the 2010 Upper House election exposed the declining popularity of the DPJ government, the Kōmeitō leadership focused on balancing between the LDP and the DPJ under the 'twisted Diet,' leaving the issue of electoral cooperation an open question (Nakano 2016: 87-150).

On the other hand, unlike the Kōmeitō whose options were limited to the question of how to position itself between the two largest parties, the LDP's strategic move was to cultivate the new source of support. With the emergence of splinter parties toward the end of the DPJ government, along with the rise of local parties with right-wing inclinations, the LDP-Kōmeitō alliance was to face another phase of transformation after 2012.

4. Distracted Cooperation: Opposition Fragmentation and the Rise of New Parties

1) New Candidates, New Parties (2012-2014)

The biggest challenge for the LDP-Kōmeitō alliance, as it was revealed in the result of the 2009 election, derived not only from the behaviors of 'floating voters,' but also from the scale of non-LDP/Kōmeitō conservative votes which were pervasive in urban regions. As the integration of support bases between the LDP and Kōmeitō had reached a certain saturation point, the dominance of the LDP-Kōmeitō alliance after 2012 became increasingly dependent on external environment.

One thing that returned to the scene of party competition in Japan after 2009, which became even more salient in 2012, was multi-partism. The source of opposition fragmentation that accelerated even further toward the end of the DPJ rule was two-fold: party split and the rise of local party. First, toward the end of the DPJ government, its internal strife centering around Ozawa Ichiro had become beyond repair, and with PM

Noda's problematic handling of consumption tax increase, thirty-seven Lower House representatives defected from the DPJ and formed People's Life First in July 2012 (which later dissolved to join Tomorrow Party of Japan, *Nihon Miraino Tou* before the general election). Second, the phenomenal rise of Osaka Restoration Association and its national-level counterpart Japan Restoration Party (JRP) since 2011, was said to become the 'typhoon eye' for the future electoral competition. In addition, Your Party (*Minnano tou*), organized by defectors from LDP and DPJ in 2009, enhanced their support as anti-establishment political party, as the support rate for the DPJ government began to plummet. In the 2012 general elections, these political parties fielded significant number of district candidates particularly in urban districts.¹⁵³ The total number of district candidates swelled up to 1,294, increasing the competition rate per district from 3.80 in 2009 to 4.31 in 2012. In thirty-six urban districts, the average number of candidates per district rose much higher to 4.82. Another characteristic of the 2012 general election was the increased number of new candidates. Of 1,294 candidates nationwide, 789 were *shinjin* (new) candidates, making up of 61.0%. Of 38 district candidates in the urban regions, eight of them were fielded for the first time in the district.

The result, shown in [Figure IV-7], highlighted the 'reinstitution' of multi-partism with LDP dominance. While the LDP secured 294 of 480 seats, the DPJ, who had won a landslide victory of 308 seats only three years before, was only able to secure 57, followed by the newly established JRP who earned 54 seats. Kōmeitō had regained its original party strength of 31. The critical difference between the LDP's two victories in 2005 and 2012 was the composition of the opposition forces. While the 2005 election was characterized as 'two-party competition' in which two largest parties occupied 80% of vote share in SMDs and 70% in PR, in 2012, the combined vote share of the LDP and the largest opposition (DPJ) was 65.8% in SMD and 43.6% in PR. The rest of the votes were divided among smaller parties, including JRP and Kōmeitō.¹⁵⁴

While the landslide victory of the LDP-Kōmeitō alliance may validate the recovery

¹⁵³ Number of district candidates for the new parties in 2012 were: 111 for Tomorrow Party of Japan, 151 for Japan Restoration Party, and 65 for Your Party.

¹⁵⁴ Vote shares in PR: LDP 27.62%, DPJ 16.00%, JRP 20.38%, Kōmeitō 11.83%, Your Party 8.72%, Tomorrow Party of Japan 5.69%, JCP 6.13%, etc.

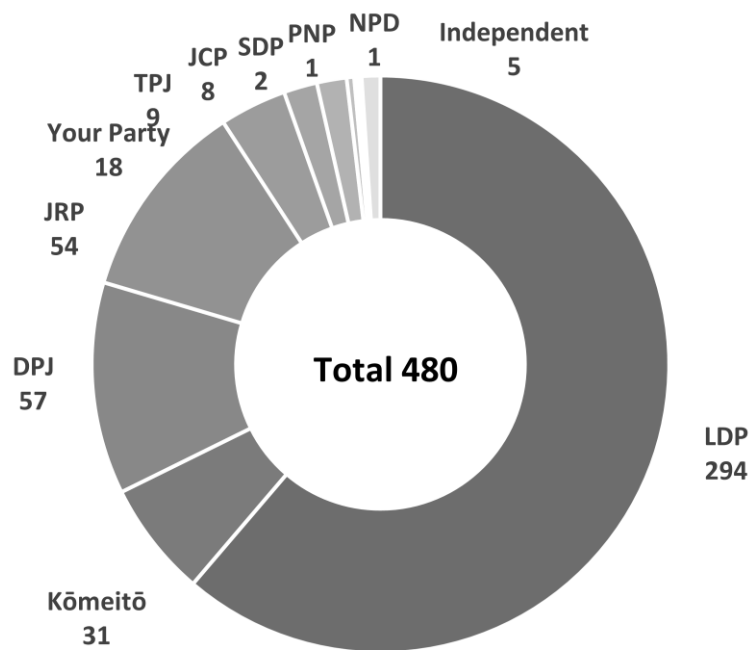


Figure IV-7 Result of 2012 Lower House Election

of the coalition government on the surface, a closer look reveals significant alterations to the mechanism of electoral cooperation between the two parties. First of all, due to a sudden increase of first-time candidates, the Kōmeitō's recommendation rate vis-à-vis 288 LDP candidates declined rather sharply from 94.1% in 2009 to 78.1% in 2012.¹⁵⁵ While the recommendation alone does not necessarily imply the full-fledged electoral mobilization between the two parties in each district, the lack of recommendation indicates the absence of personal accountability which, as we have seen in the previous sections, sometimes takes time to cultivate. In other words, new candidates are less likely to receive recommendations from the Kōmeitō than the experienced candidates. In 2012, while 86.9% of experienced candidates received recommendations, only 64.6% of new candidates did.¹⁵⁶ Whether or not a candidate has been recommended from the Kōmeitō in the district reflects the level of consensus between the candidate and the Kōmeitō's local authority, if not the amicability of the relationship. The difficulty of vote cultivation among the new LDP candidates is also evident in their vote counts. In thirty-eight urban districts in Tokyo, Kanagawa, Osaka, and Hyogo, six of them ran in the respective district for the first time in 2012. Their vote gains, compared to those of the predecessors who ran in the same districts in 2009, decreased by 23.4%,¹⁵⁷ while the total vote counts of the rest of the LDP candidates in twenty-four districts decreased only by 2.2% between 2009 and 2012.¹⁵⁸

To see how 'recommendation from the Kōmeitō' or the candidate's experience affect the levels of vote integration in urban districts, [Table IV-13] shows the consolidation rate of LDP/Kōmeitō candidates in urban districts.¹⁵⁹ Vote consolidation rate (CR) is the percentage of a candidate's vote gain in SMD divided by the number of aggravate vote counts of the LDP and Kōmeitō's PR votes in each of the respective

¹⁵⁵ 225 LDP candidates received recommendations from the Kōmeitō

¹⁵⁶ Of 113 new candidates, 73 received recommendations while 40 did not. Of 175 experienced candidates, 152 received recommendations while 23 did not.

¹⁵⁷ Total vote counts of LDP candidates who ran in six districts (Tokyo Districts 1, 2, 5, 15, 16, and Osaka 1) was 621,890 in 2009 and 476,504 in 2012.

¹⁵⁸ Total 24 LDP candidates in urban districts, excluding Osaka District 2 where Sato Akira, who had strong personal support bases in the district already, was endorsed in 2012.

¹⁵⁹ While Wakamiya Kenji (Tokyo 5) had previous experiences as Lower House member, it was his first time running as district candidate in Tokyo 5.

Table IV-13 Vote consolidation rate (CR) of coalition candidates in urban districts (2012, SMD)

	District	LDP Candidate	New / Former	Rec.	CR (%)	# candi date	Elected
1	Tokyo 9	Sugawara Isshu	F	1	150.06%	4	LDP
2	Tokyo 8	Ishihara Nobuaki	F	1	149.44%	4	LDP
3	Kanagawa 2	Suga Yoshihide	F	1	147.80%	3	LDP
4	Tokyo 10	Koike Yuriko	F	1	147.19%	4	LDP
5	Tokyo 17	Hirasawa Katsuei	F	0	130.62%	4	LDP
6	Kanagawa 7	Suzuki Keisuke	F	1	127.84%	5	LDP
7	Tokyo 13	Kamoshira Ichiro	F	1	126.93%	5	LDP
8	Tokyo 11	Shimomura Hakubun	F	1	124.67%	5	LDP
9	Tokyo 3	Ishihara Hirotaka	F	1	119.13%	4	LDP
10	Kanagawa 18	Yamagiwa Taishiro	F	1	117.05%	5	LDP
11	Kanagawa 5	Sakai Manabu	F	1	115.67%	6	LDP
12	Tokyo 14	Matsushima Midori	F	1	111.69%	7	LDP
13	Kanagawa 1	Matsumoto Jun	F	1	111.49%	5	LDP
14	Hyogo 1	Moriyama Masahito	F	1	110.34%	4	LDP
15	Osaka 4	Nakayama Yatsuhide	F	1	106.24%	5	JRP
16	Tokyo 6	Ochi Takao	F	1	103.94%	5	LDP
17	Osaka 2	Sato Akira	F	1	103.63%	5	LDP
18	Tokyo 4	Taira Masaaki	F	1	102.97%	6	LDP
19	Kanagawa 3	Okonogi Hachiro	F	1	102.42%	6	LDP
20	Kanagawa 10	Tanaka Kazunori	F	1	101.78%	5	LDP
21	Kanagawa 9	Nakayama Norihiro	N	1	99.68%	4	DPJ
22	Tokyo 16	Onishi Hideo	N	1	95.72%	6	LDP
23	Tokyo 2	Tsuji Kiyoto	N	0	95.17%	5	LDP
24	Tokyo 5	Wakamiya Kenji	F*	0	93.93%	6	LDP
25	Tokyo 7	Matsumoto Fumiaki	F	0	90.69%	6	DPJ
26	Tokyo 15	Akimoto Tsukasa	N	1	88.59%	5	YOUR
27	Kanagawa 8	Fukuda Mineyuki	F	1	84.72%	4	YOUR
28	Tokyo 1	Yamada Miki	N	1	82.85%	8	LDP
29	Hyogo 3	Seki Yoshihiro	F	1	82.03%	5	LDP
30	Osaka 17	Okashita Nobuko	F	0	81.59%	6	JRP
31	Osaka 1	Onishi Hiroyuki	N	0	72.69%	6	JRP
				25	112.17%	5.1	

district. In other words, if the CR is 100%, the candidate mobilized the same scale supporters who voted for LDP or Kōmeitō in the PR. The lower the CR, it means it was more difficult for the candidate to mobilize the supporters who voted for the coalition in PR. Hirasawa Katsuei (Tokyo 17) is the only LDP candidate whose CR was significantly high without Kōmeitō recommendation. On the other hand, the CR of other five LDP candidates without Kōmeitō nomination was less than 100% and placed in the lower ranks, hinting certain level of positive correlation between recommendation and vote counts. Further, the table shows relatively low CR among the LDP's new candidates as well.

On the other hand, for Kōmeitō's new candidates, such 'entrance barrier' for the new candidates did not exist. In 2012, Kōmeitō fielded three new candidates in Osaka Districts 3, 5, and 6, but the total vote counts in these districts increased by 9.2%. Such differing patterns of vote gains among new candidates highlight the distinct nature of the two parties' vote cultivation; while LDP's new candidates cannot simply depend on the electoral resources cultivated by their predecessors, the source of Kōmeitō candidates' votes derive largely from their party label.

At the same time, such contrasting results between the LDP and Kōmeitō's candidates derived not only from the differences in local electoral resources of each candidate, but also from the pre-electoral arrangement with the new party—particularly the Japan Restoration Party in Osaka. Despite the overwhelming support within Osaka prefecture, the JRP did not field its candidates in the Kōmeitō's 'claimed territories' in Osaka and Hyogo.¹⁶⁰ Yet in the rest of the districts in Osaka, including Osaka District 1, 4, and 17, the JRP fielded new faces, causing the LDP to lose them. The only urban district in Osaka where LDP won over the JRP candidate was Osaka District 2, where the LDP endorsed Sato Akira for the first time since he 'rebelled' against prime minister Koizumi in 2005. At the same time, not only the JRP's regional popularity but also the lack of robust support from the Kōmeitō was a critical factor that led to the losses of LDP

¹⁶⁰ JRP is said to have retreated from Kōmeitō's districts, because Kōmeitō promised to return the favor by cooperating with Osaka Governor Hashimoto Toru in his signature proposal of "Osaka Metropolitan Framework" in the prefectural assembly, to which the local LDP assembly members had been uncooperative.

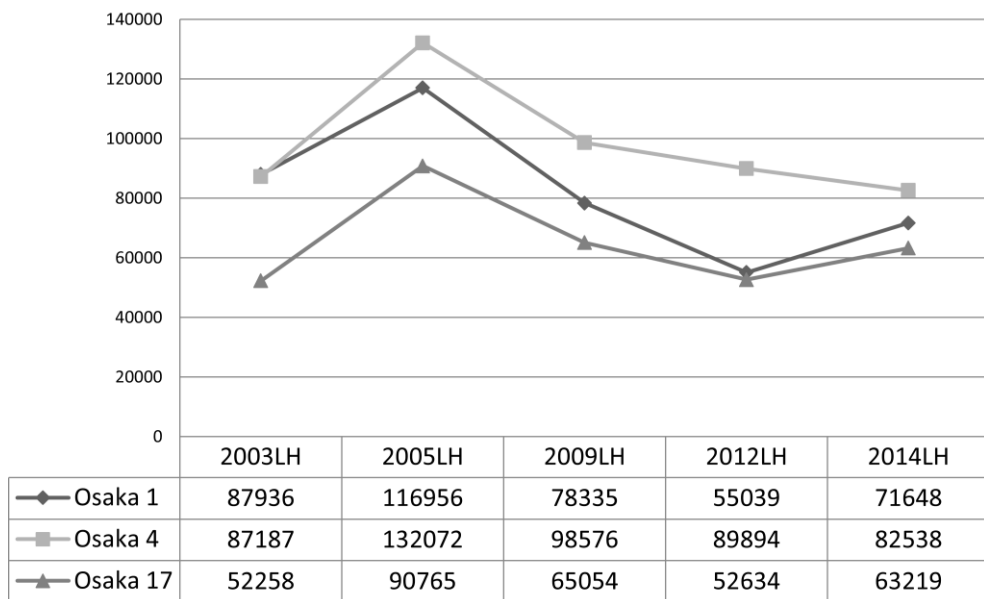


Figure IV-8 LDP Candidate's Vote Counts in Osaka D 1, 4, and 17 in SMDs

candidates in Osaka. Among four LDP candidates who ran in Osaka and Sakai Cities, three of them lost against JRP candidates who ran for the first time—in Districts 1, 4, and 17. The cause of their losses in the single-member districts was the declining scales of LDP-Kōmeitō support bases in respective districts. [Figure IV-8] shows the changes in LDP candidates' vote counts in Osaka Districts 1, 4, and 17 between 2003 and 2014 single-member competitions. In all three districts, the vote counts of LDP candidates reached the peak in 2005, while in 2012, they marked lower number of votes than their vote counts in 2009. One factor that caused such decline of LDP vote counts was the disintegration of Kōmeitō's support bases in those districts. Between 2009 and 2012, the party's vote gains in respective PR tier showed sharp decline of 15.3% (District 1), 14.6% (District 4), and 14.3% (District 17). In fact, the Kōmeitō's PR vote counts decreased by 17.5% in Osaka and Sakai Cities between 2009 and 2012, a more drastic decrease than the LDP's vote counts in the same cities of 13.9%.¹⁶¹

Such changing trend of the LDP-Kōmeitō's 'party votes' is indicative of three possible changes that are taking place in the urban competition. First, it suggests the possible deterioration of Kōmeitō's iron power bases, which had long been believed to be 'infallible.' Second, the more drastic decline of Kōmeitō's 'party votes' in Osaka (compared to the case of Tokyo, for example) may indicate the Kōmeitō's discreet side-switching in Osaka, sandwiched between LDP and JRP. This possibility will be explored in detail in the following chapter. Third, it implies the Kōmeitō's growing susceptibility to the performance of the LDP. While in 2005 the 'floating voters' discriminated the LDP and Kōmeitō in casting their 'party votes,' the simultaneous declines of PR vote gains for the LDP and Kōmeitō in the 2012 general election suggests the 'synchronized' performance of the two parties and the enhanced inter-connectedness of their electoral resources.

2) **'Myth' of Infallible Kōmeitō Support Base and LDP's Interminable Reliance on the Kōmeitō**

The decline of Kōmeitō's 'party votes' is not an isolated trend in Osaka; rather, it

¹⁶¹ Kōmeitō's PR vote counts in Osaka and Sakai Cities were 329,833 in 2009 and 272,223 in 2012. For the LDP, it was 390,749 in 2009 and 336,514 in 2012.

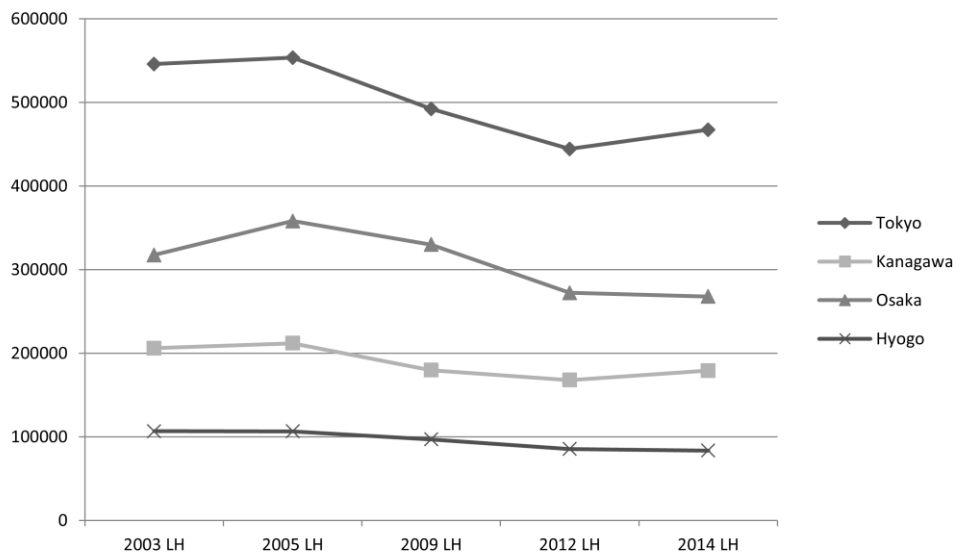


Figure IV-9 Kōmeitō's Vote Counts in Urban Cities during General Elections (2003-2014, PR)

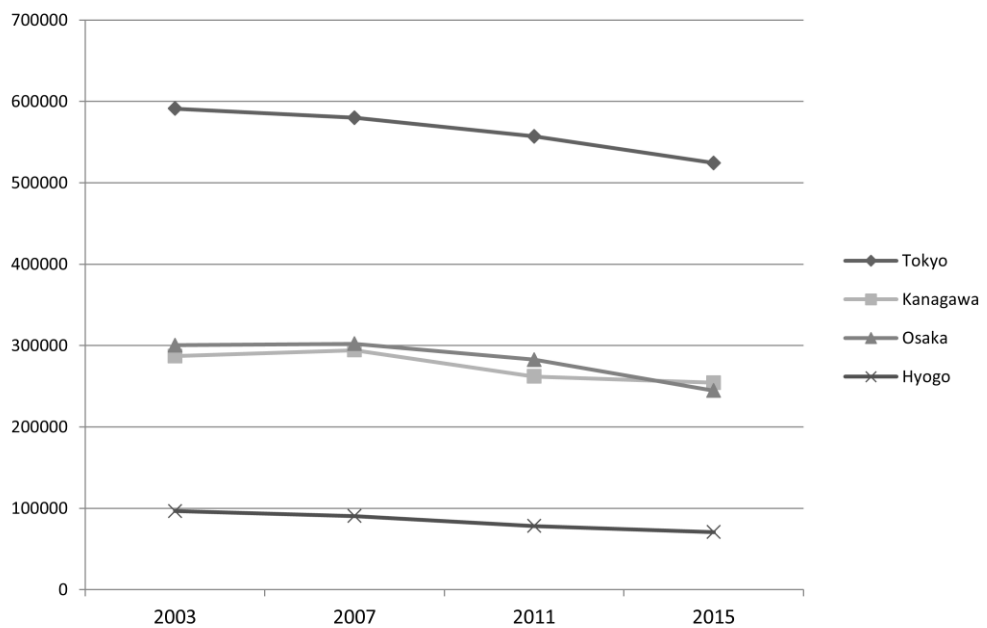


Figure IV-10 Kōmeitō's Vote Counts in Municipal Elections (2003-2015)

can be found in all urban districts. [Figure IV-9] shows the Kōmeitō's absolute vote gains in PR tier in six metropolitan cities during general elections between 2003 and 2014. Beginning in 2009, the Kōmeitō's 'party votes' in national election shows slow decline, particularly in Tokyo and Osaka; between 2003 and 2012, the Kōmeitō's PR vote gains in the urban districts declined by 17.5%. Similar trend can also be found in the local election; the Kōmeitō's vote counts in municipal elections between 2003 and 2015 also declined by 14.2% ([Figure IV-10]) in six metropolitan cities. The decline of Kōmeitō's absolute vote gains that began in the mid-2000s seem to suggest that the common perception of Kōmeitō's support bases as 'infallible' needs to be reexamined. In considering the effect of LDP-Kōmeitō electoral alliance, it is necessarily to factor the changing scale of Kōmeitō's support bases.

In fact, Kōmeitō candidates' vote gains declined rather sharply between 2012 and 2014 in all single-member districts as well [**Table IV-14**]. One reason can be assigned to the lower turnout rate in the 2014 election, which was characterized as a 'surprise election' in which only 959 candidates were fielded in 300 single-member districts—the 'unprepared' DPJ only fielded 178 candidates nationwide. In districts such as Osaka Districts 3 and 5, the only competitor for the Kōmeitō candidates was JCP candidate, who increased their vote gains by 29.6% and 39.8%, respectively, absorbing the non-LDP/Kōmeitō votes in the districts. What is significant in both districts was that the absence of DPJ candidate in each district led to the vote increase of JCP candidate, rather than of the Kōmeitō's, suggesting the sharp polarity that came to exist between LDP-Kōmeitō alliance and the DPJ support bases. At the same time, such sharp chasm between LDP-Kōmeitō alliance and the other political parties enhanced Kōmeitō candidates' dependency level on the LDP votes. With declining scale of party support in the urban regions as well as confrontational relationship with other opposition forces, the only external electoral resources Kōmeitō can expect to mobilize is the support from the LDP voters. However, even the mobilization from the LDP supporters for the Kōmeitō candidates are shrinking. In 2012, 'pure' Kōmeitō votes (calculated by the party's vote gains in respective PR tiers) consisted 35.4% of the total vote gains in seven urban single-member districts in which Kōmeitō fielded candidates; yet the number went up to

Table IV-14 Kōmeitō Candidates' Vote Gains in SMDs (2012, 2014)

Turnout (%)		2012LH 59.32%		2014LH 52.66%		
		Vote Gains	#Candidate	Vote Gains	#Candidate	Decline (%)
Tokyo12	Oota Akihiro	114052	4	88499	4	-22.4%
Kanagawa6	Ueda Isamu	82147	4	78746	4	-4.1%
Osaka3	Sato Shigeki	101910	3	84943	2	-16.6%
Osaka5	Kunichige Toru	111028	3	92681	2	-16.5%
Osaka6	Isa Shinichi	116855	3	94308	3	-19.3%
Osaka 16	Kitagawa Kazuo	86464	4	66673	4	-22.9%
Hyogo2	Akaba Kazuki	87969	4	78131	3	-11.2%
TOTAL/AVERAGE		700425	3.57	583981	3.14	-16.6%

41.6% in 2014. It means that less non-Kōmeitō supporters are voting for Kōmeitō in single-member districts, endangering the elections of Kōmeitō candidates in single-member districts.

The ‘leakage’ of conservative votes from the pool of potential Kōmeitō voters can be observed most strikingly in districts where the newly-emerged parties fielded their candidates against the Kōmeitō. Let us take examples from two urban districts where Kōmeitō candidates underwent significant vote losses between 2012 and 2014: Tokyo 12 and Osaka 16. First, Kōmeitō’s Ota Akihiro has run in Tokyo District 12 since 2003, and he managed to mobilize 114,052 votes in 2012, bouncing back from the loss in 2009. Two years later, however, his absolute vote gains declined by 22.4%, earning 88,499 votes. Even though he won the election, it was the lowest vote counts he had earned as a district candidate. The question, then, is where his 25,553 votes disappeared to. [Table IV-15] shows the results of Tokyo District 12 in 2012 and 2014, which indicates that the emergence of a new player in 2014 led to a significant vote loss for Ota. While Hattori Masami from Happiness Realization Party (HRP, *kōfuku jittsugentou*), who earned 4.2% of vote share in 2012, withdrew in 2014, Tamogami Toshio, a right-wing former General

Table IV-15 Result of Tokyo District 12 (2012-2014)

CANDIDATE	OTA AKIHIRO	IKEUCHI SAORI	AOKI AI	HATTORI MASAMI	TAMOGAMI TOSHIO	TOTAL
AFFILIATION	Kōmeitō	JCP	TPJ/PLP	HRP	PFG	
2012 LH	114052	41934	56432	9359	0	221777
2014 LH	88499	44721	40067	0	39233	212520
DIFF. (2014-2012)	-25553	2787	-16365	-9359	39233	-9257

of Air Self-Defense Force, declared his candidacy. Tamogami, who had been fired from the public position for a problematic remark on Japan's wartime aggression, ran for Governor of Tokyo in 2014, in which he earned 12.6% of vote share and ended up fourth place. Given his background, his unexpectedly high vote share in the gubernatorial election was taken as the sign of Japan's rightward tilt. After the election, he joined with Ishihara Shintaro-led Party of Future Generation (PFG, *jisedaino tou*), and declared his candidacy in Tokyo District 12, igniting the competition against Ota.

As the result shows, Tamogami was only able to earn 18.5% vote share, and ended up in the last place in the district. What is interesting, on the other hand, is where his nearly 40,000 votes came from. As the table shows, among three candidates who ran in both 2012 and 2014 elections, the JCP's Ikeuchi Saori was the only candidate who increased the absolute vote gains. Kōmeitō's Ota and Aoki Ai, who ran as Tomorrow Party of Japan (TPJ, *nihon miraino tou*) candidate in 2012 and People's Life Party (PLP, *seikatsuno tou*) in 2014, lost 22.4% and 29.0% of votes between the two elections, respectively. If we assume that the decreased number of total votes casted between 2012 and 2014 (9,257) was largely caused by the withdrawal of the HRP candidate who earned 9,359 votes in the 2012 election, and also assuming that no one who voted for Ota in 2012 voted for the JCP candidate Ikeuchi in 2014, it is possible to speculate that about 65% of Tamogami's votes—about 25,000 votes—came from the pool of voters who had voted

for Ota in 2012.¹⁶² Since it is highly unlikely that the liberal-conservative Kōmeitō supporters abandon their candidate and vote for rightwing Tamogami instead, it is possible to infer from the result that it was the LDP supporters with rightwing inclinations who discarded the LDP-Kōmeitō framework in their voting decisions.

Same trend was also found in Osaka District 16, where Kōmeitō's Kitagawa Kazuo had run since 1996 and maintained his seat except in the 2009 general election. Even when he lost against DPJ's Moriyama Hiroyuki in 2009, Kitagawa mobilized about 85,000 votes in the district, yet his vote gains declined significantly between 2012 and 2014 by 22.9%. [Table IV-16] shows the results of Osaka District 16 in the 2012 and 2014 general elections. Similar to the case of Tokyo 12, a PFG candidate Nishimura Shingo joined the competition in 2014, while Nakamura Masaru, who earned about 10.4% vote share in 2012 withdrew from the district. Nishimura managed to earn 17.2% vote share, ending up in the third place after Kitagawa and DPJ's Moriyama Hiroyuki. If we apply the similar assumptions as the case of Tokyo 12 and assume that those who voted for Kitagawa in 2012 but did not in 2014 supported Nishimura, then it means that about 74.5% of Nishigamo's vote gains came from those who had supported the LDP-Kōmeitō framework before 2014.

Table IV-16 Result of Osaka District 16 (2012-2014)

CANDIDATE	KITAGAWA KAZUO	MORIYAMA HIROYUKI	OKAI (2012) MASU (2014)	NAKAMURA MASARU	NISHIMURA SHINGO	TOTAL
AFFILIATION	Kōmeitō	DPJ	JCP	Other	PFG	
2012 LH	86464	42328	23652	17711		170155
2014 LH	66673	38331	22809		26567	154380
DIFF. (2014-2012)	-19791	-3997	-843	-17711	26567	-15775

¹⁶² $(25,553/39,223) \times 100 = 65.13\%$

Along with the slow but continuous decline of vote gains in municipal elections in the metropolitan cities, these analyses indicate that the Kōmeitō's loss of votes in urban regions is caused not only by the shrinkage of Kōmeitō's own support bases but also by the defections of non-Kōmeitō, rightwing conservative voters from the LDP-Kōmeitō framework. Put another way, the level of coherence among the supporters of LDP-Kōmeitō framework significantly weakened with the rise of rightwing conservative parties, such as the JRP and PFG. In part, such changes were caused by the shifts in the structures of competition in these districts which transformed from largely two-party competition to multi-partism that induced dispersion of votes among conservative voters. At the same time, that majority of votes cultivated by the candidates endorsed by the rightwing parties were drawn from the Kōmeitō candidates is indicative of the unmistakable trend that some conservative voters, who used to support the LDP-Kōmeitō framework, are now preferring more 'rightist' agendas pressed forward by the new parties.

At the same time, the DPJ's downfall in 2012 and the following dispersion of conservative votes did not lead to the 'recovery' of the LDP's power base either. Rather, despite the general assessment of the 2012 general election as the 'landslide victory' of the LDP-Kōmeitō alliance, at least in the urban districts, it is difficult to find any trace of 'reinstated popularity' of the LDP. [Table V-17] shows the aggregate vote counts of district candidates in 2009 and 2012 elections by party, who ran in the thirty-one urban districts in Tokyo, Kanagawa, Osaka, and Hyogo (excluding the seven districts where Kōmeitō fielded its candidates). As the table shows, the absolute aggregate vote gains of DPJ candidates decreased by 60.8%, losing more than two million vote counts between the two elections. Yet the loss of DPJ's votes did not lead to the increase of LDP candidates' vote gains; in absolute number, the LDP also lost 5% of the votes in thirty-one single-member districts. Instead, it was Japan Restoration Party, Your Party, and the Tomorrow Party of Japan (splinter party from DPJ), who seemed to have become the

Table IV-17 Vote Counts by Party in 31 Metropolitan SMDs (2009-2012)

	LDP	DPJ	TPJ	JRP	YOUR PARTY	JCP	TOTAL
2009 LH	3062603	3669405	0	0	202293	683753	7618054
2012 LH	2910859	1438251	443491	1051051	847277	627860	7318789
DIFF. (2012-2009)	-151744	-2231154	443491	1051051	644984	-55893	-299265
INCREASE (%)	-5.0%	-60.8%	NA	NA	318.8%	-8.2%	-3.9%
#CANDIDATE (2012)	31	30	19	20	16	31	141 (Avg. 4.55)

Table IV-18 Vote Counts by Party in 31 Metropolitan SMDs (2012-2014)

	LDP	DPJ	TPJ/PLP	JRP	YOUR PARTY	PFG	JCP	TOTAL
2012 LH	2910859	1438251	443491	1051051	847277	0	627860	7318789
2014 LH	3036987	1001989	52779	1119174	0	204381	1034856	6450166
DIFF. (2014-2012)	126127.8	-436262	-390712	68123.43	-847277	204381	406996	-868623
INCREASE (%)	4.3%	-30.3%	-88.1%	6.5%	NA	NA	64.8%	-11.9%
#CANDIDATE (2014)	31	16	3	18	NA	11	31	110 (Avg. 3.55)

recipients of lost DPJ votes from 2009.¹⁶³ Considering the high competition rate among the ‘conservative’ candidates in the urban regions (which reached 3.55 per district excluding the JCP candidates), the reason for the decisive victory of the LDP candidates, who won twenty-four districts of thirty-one districts, owed to the dispersion of non-LDP conservative votes among opposition candidates.

Yet the result of 2014 general election elucidated that, even when the number of conservative candidates go down, it does not automatically bring the defected conservative votes back to support the coalition framework. [Table IV-18] shows the aggravate vote counts by party in thirty-one metropolitan districts in the 2012 and 2014 elections. While the LDP slightly increased the vote gains in the thirty-one urban districts by 4.3%, in absolute number, the total vote gains in 2014 was less than that of 2009 election. Instead, it was JRP and newly-emerged Party of Future Generation, who made significant advancements in 2014. Further, the most striking was the result of JCP candidates; their vote gains increased by 64.8% between the two elections, and the total votes mobilized by the thirty-one JCP candidates made up 16.0% of the all casted votes. Such increase of vote gains by the JCP can only be explained by the smaller number of candidates fielded by liberal conservative parties such as DPJ or People’s Life Party, who drastically reduced the number of candidates in the urban districts. In other words, JCP can function as the ‘last resort’ for those who are against LDP-Kōmeitō framework as well as the right-wing political parties—which may explain the party’s resilience within the party competition even after the fall of leftist ideology in the 1990s.

While the overall result of the 2012 and 2014 elections expose a rather gloomy prospect for both LDP and the Kōmeitō in terms of recovering of defected votes, one thing that the results of three elections held between 2009 and 2014 illuminated was the unwavering stability of the LDP-Kōmeitō support base. The strength of the LDP-Kōmeitō coalition lies in the stability of the vote collecting abilities of each candidate,

¹⁶³ It might be questioned how the defected votes from the DPJ ended up supporting the ‘right-wing’ parties such as JRP. Murakami (2012), calling JRP a ‘rightwing populist party,’ argues that the JRP has managed to create the party image as ‘anti-establishment’ rather than emphasizing its rightist agendas, to which the voters responded with the expectations for political reforms and new types of leadership.

and the core support base remains resilient against recurring electoral challenges. As [Table IV-19] illuminates, the absolute number of vote gains of the LDP and Kōmeitō candidate in thirty-eight urban districts between 2003 and 2014 show marginal changes, except for the 2005 election. The non-LDP conservative votes,¹⁶⁴ on the other hand, seem relatively volatile, depending on the electoral circumstances at the time—at least in the urban regions. Such stability of the two-party cooperation is the critical reason why neither the LDP nor the Kōmeitō is likely to easily abandon the established electoral resources under the current electoral system.

At the same time, however, such interdependence can also become the tender spot. First, from the Kōmeitō's perspective, the duration of coalition alliance with the LDP did not lead to the expansion of its core support bases, but rather it has been experiencing the slow declines in its scale. Further, the longevity of close alliance with the LDP seems to

Table IV-19 LDP-Komeito vs. Non-LDP conservative votes in urban districts

	43 rd (2003)	44 th (2005)	45 th (2009)	46 th (2012)	47 th (2014)
Turnout (%)	58.36%	67.51%	69.28%	59.32%	52.66%
Vote Count of LDP+Kōmeitō (A)	3,413,694	4,809,560	3,741,669	3,611,284	3,620,968
Non-LDP conservative Votes	3,735,986	3,176,625	4,563,167	3,396,731	2,710,021
Kōmeitō's vote gains (PR) (B)	1,218,623	1,237,080	923,322	1,036,823	1,068,618
Ratio of Kōmeitō votes (B/A)	35.7%	25.7%	24.7%	28.7%	29.5%

¹⁶⁴ Between 2003 and 2009 elections, during which the competition rate was relative low, the non-LDP conservative votes represent the aggregate number of first conservative candidates other than LDP/Kōmeitō; for the 2012 and 2014 elections, the non-LDP conservative votes are aggregate number of the vote gains by the candidates from four conservative parties (DPJ, JRP, Your Party, and TPJ for 2012 and DPJ, JRP, Party of Future Generation, and People's Life Party for 2014).

have driven the non-LDP voters away from the potential pool of supporters, evermore narrowing the possibility of future vote expansion. Second, for the LDP, its predominance in the Diet has interminably grown to be reliant on the Kōmeitō's support during general elections. As the numbers show, Kōmeitō's vote gains in the urban districts remain constant around one million votes, and even though the supporter strength of the party appears to be shrinking, it remains to be one of the most important sources of votes for the alliance partners. Considering large number of Kōmeitō supporters participate in split-voting in the single-member districts for the LDP candidates, if we assume that 80% of Kōmeitō voters support LDP candidates in single-member districts, it is not exaggerating to estimate that Kōmeitō supporters are responsible for more than 20% of the entire vote gains of the LDP/Kōmeitō candidates in SMDs at the least.¹⁶⁵ Such vulnerability of the LDP illuminates the fact that there exist a significant number of non-LDP conservative voters in the urban districts. Even though the number of votes earned by the Japanese Communist Party is not included in the non-LDP conservative votes above, it is noteworthy that, in districts where the biggest competitor against Kōmeitō candidates are endorsed by JCP, for other conservative parties refrained from fielding their candidates against the Kōmeitō, the number of JCP votes was significantly high. For example, in 2014, Osaka 3 and 5 had only two candidates running in each district—Kōmeitō and JCP candidates—and in both districts, JCP candidates mobilized more than 60,000 votes. Given that the average vote gain for each of JCP's district candidates was 24,000, it is possible to assume that there exist a significant number of non-Kōmeitō/LDP voters, who would rather vote for JCP when no other option is presented.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁵ For example, in 2014 Kōmeitō mobilized 1,068,618 votes in the urban districts in PR. If 80% of Kōmeitō supporters (1,068,618 x 80%) participated in vote-splitting, then it would mean that 854,894 votes were casted for LDP/Kōmeitō candidates. Given that the total vote gains for the alliance candidates were 3,620,968, Kōmeitō supporters' votes constitutes 23.6% of the entire votes earned by the LDP/Kōmeitō candidates. Needless to say, not all Kōmeitō voters vote for respective LDP candidate in their district.

¹⁶⁶ In 2014, JCP fielded 292 candidates, and its total vote gain was 7,040,170. The JCP's PR vote gain increased by 64% since 2012.

5. Transformation of the LDP-Kōmeitō Electoral Alliance: From Discord to Integration, then to Distraction

This chapter tried to illuminate the temporal variations of LDP-Kōmeitō electoral alliance between 2000 and 2014, focusing on the mechanism of cooperation at central and prefectural levels along with the degrees of electoral mobilization within each district. In the fifteen-year period, the two-party relations transformed from discord to integration, then to distraction. The initial stage—specifically, the 2000 general election—was characterized by the discord at all three levels of politics. At the leadership level, the LDP's internal strife over of factional conflicts spilled over to the question of legitimacy of the coalition alliance with the Kōmeitō. The LDP leadership under the Obuchi and then Mori cabinets utilized the power of endorsement in containing those who remained critical toward the party leadership. Further, reflecting the rather 'forceful' reconciliations between the LDP and the Kōmeitō, the Kōmeitō as well as the LDP did not engage in a full-fledged cooperation at the prefectural level either. The LDP's keiretsu politicians and personally-cultivated support bases remained loyal to the individual politicians, rather than the party initiative, in supporting (former) LDP candidates over the Kōmeitō. Put simply, the alliance with the Kōmeitō was 'rejected' by the local actors as well as the voters, elucidating the limited effect of electoral institutions in the early stage.

Beginning in 2003, however, such initial discontent was assuaged by the changes in the structure of competition. The rise of two-party competition, a trend that accelerated with the growing popularity of the DPJ, induced the convergence of LDP-Kōmeitō electoral resources, both in terms of inter-party negotiations and the voting behaviors among the supporters. With the changes in Kōmeitō's fielding strategy, the numbers of mutual recommendations as well as the vote consolidation made significant advancement between 2003 and 2005 elections. At the same time, such integration of two camps did not occur uniformly, but rather developed unequally across districts and regions. Though the decreasing number of candidates and the growing tendency for two-party competition led to the condensation of LDP-Kōmeitō alliance among voters, it was still possible to observe how the development of two-party electoral alliance remained susceptible to the district-specific electoral institutions. Furthermore, the behaviors of 'floating voters' in

	Assuaging Discontent	Domination through Integration	Challenged Dominance despite Consolidated Alliance	Opposition- Fragmentation & Reinstituted Domination
General Election	2000	2003/2005	2009	2012/2014
Structure of Competition	Intra-Coalition Competition	Two-Party Competition	Opposition Fragmentation	
CENTRAL (candidate coordination)	X	⊙	⊙	⊙
PREFECTURAL (recommendation)	38.5%	46.7% → 63.3%	93.3%	80.6% → 96.8%
DISTRICT (vote mobilization)	X	O	⊙	O

the 2005 general election suggested that there was a trace of ‘perceptual segregation’ that stagnated Kōmeitō’s expansion of supporters amid LDP’s exceptional performance under the Koizumi cabinet.

While it looked as though the two parties succeeded in solidifying the invincible electoral formula by integrating LDP-Kōmeitō electoral resources with the support from ‘swing voters’ as the icing on top, the experience of electoral defeat in 2009 as well as the following reinstitution of opposition fragmentation since 2012 ‘distracted’ the consolidated two-party alliance. The LDP-Kōmeitō alliance underwent a historic electoral defeat in 2009 despite high level of cooperation between the two parties at all levels of politics, which led to the realization that the two-party’s electoral cartel, no matter how efficient it may have been under the LDP-DPJ dichotomy, was not enough to thwart the increasing number of non-LDP/Kōmeitō conservative voters in the urban districts. Such awakening was reconfirmed in the 2012 general election, which, despite the coalition’s reclaim over control in the Lower House, showed no sign of recovery in terms of coalition’s popularity. While the inter-party negotiations over candidate coordination and mutual recommendation seem to have bounced back in 2014, the levels of vote relocation illuminate the weakening coherence among the two support bases at the lowest strata of political mobilization. While some LDP supporters display the willingness to abandon the LDP-Kōmeitō framework, the Kōmeitō, sandwiched between LDP and a new political phenomenon Japan Restoration Party, seems to be taking on a new strategy of ‘discreet and selective cooperation.’

While recent changes in the nature of electoral competitions caused by rise of local parties and continuous fragmentation of opposition forces may seem to be undercutting the coherence of LDP-Kōmeitō electoral alliance, it does not mean that the two-party relationship, founded upon the ‘electoral alliance,’ is simply headed for further disintegration. Rather, the two parties are likely to utilize the institutionalized cooperation mechanism, characterized by flexibility and adaptability, in battling newly-rising challenges in years to come. As the cases discussed in this chapter tried to illuminate, the strength and sustainability of the LDP-Kōmeitō electoral alliance lay in its ability to adapt to changing external environments, as well as its flexibility to incorporate

divergent local logics to become integrated into the overall inter-party framework. The source of such flexibility derives from quite pragmatic reason: The LDP's level of dependency on the Kōmeitō's support base has become interminable. While the opposition fragmentation is currently mutilating such possibility, when combined, the non-LDP/Kōmeitō votes can overpower the LDP-Kōmeitō electoral alliance in urban districts.

At the same time, it is also undeniable that the LDP-Kōmeitō electoral alliance has encountered new challenges, which may bring permanent alterations to the mechanism of two-party cooperation. Specifically, such changes were caused not only by declining support for the two parties, but more significantly by the emergence of new players—most prominently, the rise of new parties. The rise of new parties is a fairly recent phenomenon that began in the early 2010s which has brought new trend to the electoral competitions in metropolitan cities and also to the LDP-Kōmeitō relations. The next chapter deals with how this new trend is transforming the inter-party electoral alliance between the LDP and the Kōmeitō, and how the mechanism of 'adaptation' accommodates changing center-local nexus.

V. CROSS-REGIONAL VARIATIONS IN URBAN ELECTORAL COOPERATION: RISE OF LOCAL PARTIES AND LDP-KŌMEITŌ ALLIANCE

The previous chapter discussed the temporal development of LDP-Kōmeitō electoral alliance, which transformed from discord to integration, and then to distraction over the two-decade period. While these changes were brought about largely by the compositions opposition forces at the national level, the analyses showed that the variations derived not only from the structural shift within party competition, but also from the regionally-embedded institutional variations as well. Put differently, the ‘flexibility’ of the LDP-Kōmeitō alliance can also be found in its adjustment to region-specific situations that are susceptible to local electoral settings. The purpose of this chapter is to elucidate upon the causes of regional variations and how they affect the operations of electoral cooperation between the LDP and the Kōmeitō at the national level, by paying particular attention to the cases of Tokyo and Osaka.

This chapter begins by asking a simple question: Why does the LDP-Kōmeitō electoral alliance often display divergent postures in different regions? As discussed in Chapter III, Tokyo and Osaka are the two prefectures where Kōmeitō earns the highest vote shares not only in the national elections but also in the local elections. Kōmeitō’s vote shares in the 2003 general local elections in Osaka and Tokyo reached more than 20%, earning about 560,000 and 700,000 votes, respectively. Yet, as mentioned in the previous chapter, it is possible to observe contrasting patterns in the development of two-party relationship between the two parties. For example, while the level of cooperation in terms of the number of recommendations and scales of vote mobilization had reached a high point in the 2000 election in Osaka, it was only after 2003 the inter-party conflict was radically mollified in Tokyo. Further, Kōmeitō’s district candidates in Tokyo and Osaka faced dissimilar consequences of the LDP’s poor performance in the 2009 general election. In Tokyo, Kōmeitō’s Ota Akihiro in District 12 managed to muster almost as many votes as he did in 2005, while four Kōmeitō candidates in Osaka lost average of 15% of their vote counts between the two elections.

More significantly, perhaps nothing better illustrates the regional contrast of the Kōmeitō’s behaviors than its reactions to the rise of local parties in the two prefectures.

The rise of Osaka Restoration Association (*oosaka ishinno kai*, ORA) since the late 2000s was the beginning of a series of restructuring that imposed significant effects on the LDP-Kōmeitō relations both at local and national levels. In a similar vein, the Kōmeitō faced a dilemma when Tokyo Governor Koike Yuriko's Tomin First Party in 2017 openly confronted Tokyo LDP branch, declaring to seek a simple majority in the upcoming Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly election. Kōmeitō's reactions to these similar trends that derived from changing local political landscape were quite distinct. In Osaka, while the Kōmeitō paid meticulous attention to not antagonize Hashimoto governance and the ORA, it also never severed long-established electoral as well as political ties with the LDP in the local assembly. In Tokyo, on the other hand, the Kōmeitō surprised many observers—and most of all the LDP—when the party decided to suspend the decades-long local alliance relationship with the LDP and carry out full-fledged electoral cooperation with Tomin First Party in the 2017 Metropolitan Assembly election.

While such seemingly inconsistent behaviors of the Kōmeitō often evoke criticism against the party as 'opportunistic,' it is premature to assume that Kōmeitō's behaviors are determined solely by the electoral calculation. Those who are critical toward Kōmeitō's frequent side-switching often claim that the Kōmeitō only follows the "wind," and changes its partner based on the calculations of foreseeable elections. Yet such criticism is problematic at least on two grounds. First, it assumes 'perfect information' on the side of the Kōmeitō. In the hindsight, unlike the LDP, the Kōmeitō did not suffer electoral losses after the rise of local parties, but it was due to electoral strategy, not because the party had perfect information. Second, if it were only the electoral prospects that constrained the Kōmeitō's behaviors, then it is difficult to find any reason not to have cooperated with Hashimoto's ORA in the 2011 local election, in which the ORA apparently did quite well without Kōmeitō's help. In other words, it is more critical to question why Kōmeitō's choices regarding local cooperation with the LDP was more constrained in Osaka than it was in Tokyo amid the similar new trend in local political landscapes.

The questions this chapter tries to unravel is why the rise of local party affect the LDP-Kōmeitō alliance differently across regions. First, this chapter discusses the two

critical factors that affect inter-party relations at the local level, namely the local electoral systems and power balances, in order to analyze how the institutional settings have shaped divergent LDP-Kōmeitō alliances in the two prefectures before the rise of local parties. Second, I will discuss the phenomenon of rising local parties in relations to the changing local political landscape in urban regions of Japan, and elucidate how these ‘new players’ have reshaped the ‘situated rationality’ of the existing political parties. As the analyses will try to illuminate, the distinct regional behaviors is not only founded upon the strategic calculation deriving from static institutional settings, such as electoral systems, but also historical context, experiences, and inter-party organizational relations, as well as the meticulous calculations of political and electoral interests, formulate and shape divergent ‘perceptions’ toward the new regional phenomenon.

1. The Local Institutional Settings and the Rise of Local Parties

1) Diversity of Local Party Organizations and Rise of Local Parties

The question of regional variety within a single political party has been approached from the perspective of party’s organizational characteristics. There has been a growing recognition that the party organizations are no longer—if it ever was—characterized by hierarchical order in which the central leadership controls the lower strata of party organization; instead, the decline of mass parties and diversifications of voter interests have induced the decentralization of power within political parties in order to maintain party strength during elections (Hopkin 2003). In line with such argument, some scholars have demonstrated that the regional elections operate around its own logics and mechanism of political representations as well as unique regional issues, which are often unassociated with the political matters of the state (Deschuwer 2006; Schakel and Jeffery 2012; Jeffery and Hough 2003).

Unlike the development of political parties in Europe, on the other hand, that political parties do not possess centralized organizational hierarchy has been a common understanding in Japan, particularly regarding the party organization of the LDP. Specifically, the old electoral system of multi-member district system was pointed out as the primary reason why the LDP’s institutionalization of party organization evolved

around factions, rather than the centralized party leadership, inducing ‘decentralization’ of party’s organizational structure (Sato and Matsuzaki 1986: 52-55). Despite the institutional change on the national level after 1994, however, the ‘centralization effect’ of single-member district system remains limited. Analyzing the role of *kenren*, or local party branch, of the LDP perceived among the local LDP politicians, Soga (2013) points out that, compared to other major political parties, the local organizations of the LDP and the DPJ plays the least significant role in terms of vote mobilizations, policy formation, and candidate evaluations. He categorizes LDP as ‘segregated party system,’ while calling Kōmeitō a ‘centralized party organization.’¹⁶⁷ At the same time, case studies of *kenren* have pointed out that the center-local relationship within a single party organization tend to display diverse, region-specific characteristics, and the local political actors weigh and balance their relationships with local as well as central party organizations, organize their own personal support bases, depending on surrounding electoral as well as socioeconomic environments (Umawatari 2013; Sunahara 2012b; Shinada 2012).

Unlike the abundant study on LDP’s party organizations and its development, on the other hand, not much has been revealed about the Kōmeitō’s party organization, except perhaps for a common characterization of the party as ‘highly-centralized’ (Hori 1973). Typically, the Kōmeitō’s party organization is characterized by highly centralized pyramid structure, consisting of central headquarter, provincial headquarter, prefectural headquarter, general headquarter, and area headquarter.¹⁶⁸ What is often overlooked, on

¹⁶⁷ Soga’s categorization is drawn from Tatebayashi (2013:9)’s four categorizations of center-local relationship of party organizations with two variables: the level of autonomy and participation by the local party branch: segregated party system (high autonomy, low participation); centralized party system (low levels of autonomy and participation); integrated party system (low autonomy, high participation); and federalist party system (high levels of both autonomy and participation). Here, local autonomy is defined by the degrees to which local party branches determine the local policy preferences, local leadership, and candidate endorsement (selection, endorsement, recommendation) during local elections; and level of participation is scaled by the degrees to which local representatives participate in the decision-making processes on national matter (candidate endorsement, policy formation, and selection of national party leadership) (7-11).

¹⁶⁸ Provincial headquarter, or *hōmen honbu*, is the largest unit that divide Japan into thirteen provincial areas, namely Hokkaido, Tohoku, Kanto, Tokyo, Tokaido, Hokuriku-Shinetsu,

the other hand, is the critical role of Kōmeitō's prefectural headquarters in dealing with everyday political activities—from candidate evaluations, policy formation, to electoral mobilization. The empowerment of prefectural headquarters through the downward delegation of power was a result of external pressure that forced structural reform upon Kōmeitō-Sōka Gakkai relations after the press suppression incident in 1970. While the Kōmeitō's 1970 Yearly Agenda, adopted at the 8th Party Convention held in June, is often cited as the turning point for the organizational separation between Kōmeitō and Sōka Gakkai as well as the former's shift from progressivism to 'centrism,'¹⁶⁹ it is also worth noting that it initiated rather drastic structural reform as well. Specifically, the 1970 Yearly Agenda put forward three measures to consolidate 'new organization,' which included the strengthening of organizational system centering on prefectural headquarters.¹⁷⁰ The strengthening of the role of prefectural headquarters was essentially

Chubu, Kansai, Chugoku, Shikoku, Kyushu, and Okinawa, with a national Diet member appointed as chief executive of each *hōmen*. Below, forty-seven prefectural headquarters (*todōfuken honbu*) are placed under corresponding provinces, where prefectural chief executives, most commonly prefectural assembly members, lead each unit. Within each prefecture, there are multiple general headquarters (*sōshibu*) depending on the membership size, and either prefectural or city assembly member is chosen as the chief executive. This general headquarter is responsible for filing reports on income and expenditure of the political activities, and as one interviewee put it, "this is where the wallet is" (Interview with Kōmeitō central HQ staff on December 13, 2016). *Sōshibu* is further divided into area headquarters, or *shibu*, where mostly a party member is the director of each unit. In metropolitan areas, there are about ten area headquarters in each general headquarter. And when the size of *shibu* is large enough, the unit is further divided into districts, or *chiku*, whose size is similar to that of *chōnaikai*, or neighborhood association.

¹⁶⁹ Kōmeitō's 1970 Yearly Agenda adopted at the 8th Party Convention brought forth two policy shifts that were aimed at remaking the Kōmeitō as 'a true party for the mass public.' First, as a part of reviewing (and renewing) party membership, it announced the party's intension to recruit new party members outside Sōka Gakkai circle in order to highlight the Kōmeitō as 'a political party open to all people.' Second, it stated that all Kōmeitō assemblymen—local and national—will be asked to leave official posts within Sōka Gakkai in near future. The Agenda explained that these efforts were to be carried out in line with the party's attempt to become 'an autonomous and modern people's party.' In other words, the Kōmeitō declared that it would strive to turn themselves into a modern mass party by expanding the support bases outside Sōka Gakkai membership, and ultimately consolidate its political power base as 'centrist' (*chuto*) between the conservatives (LDP) and progressives (JSP), deviating from the original stance characterized by highly 'religious' political goals.

¹⁷⁰ Two other measures were re-registration of party membership and promotion of internal democratic mechanism.

an effort to alleviate the densely-centralized nature of party organization and decentralize some of the decision-making powers to the local party branches. The role of prefectural headquarters was significantly enhanced, such as launching of executive bureaus (including organizational, policy, and public relations bureaus), whose operations became the responsibility of prefectural executive committee, which consisted of general manager, vice general manager, secretary-general, etc. Further, local daily activities, from public relations, election campaigns, to hosting of variety of policy study sessions, were to be organized ‘autonomously and voluntarily’ by the local leadership and activists.¹⁷¹

In other words, both LDP and the Kōmeitō developed some degree of local decision-making processes within party organizations, which is likely to play a critical role in shaping the divergent interactive mechanism at the local level—which consequentially bears significance in the two-party relations at national levels as well. In discussing why local political actors shape divergent opportunity structures, or why local party branches often develop different organizational structures, the scholars have presented several variables in terms of institutional factors. The studies on the effects of multi-level political systems on the behaviors of local politicians suggest several factors in determining local politicians’ electoral strategies (Deschuer 2006; Sunahara 2010, 2012; Tatebayashi 2012; Sunahara and Hijino 2013). First, the local electoral system, specifically the *district magnitude* in local elections, has been considered as one of the most critical determinants of the running candidates’ dependency level on party labels (Tatebayashi 2012). The electoral strategies of candidates would differ depending on whether they are running in single-member district system or multi-member district system (Carey and Shugart 1995; Cox 1997). For example, the district magnitudes of Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly election vary across electoral districts between 1 and 8, and in municipal ward assembly elections, it ranges from 25 to 50, according to the size of administrative ward. In Osaka, on the other hand, only one or two representatives are elected from a single district in prefectural assembly election, and the district magnitudes of city assembly elections in Osaka and Sakai cities are relatively small compared to Tokyo, ranging between 2 to 9 [Appendix 1-4]. The implication here is that the behaviors

¹⁷¹ 公明新聞 1970.6. 15 3-5頁

of a local LDP politician would be more constrained if his/her dependency on party label is high (i.e. when district magnitude is small, such as in Osaka), while those who rely less on party labels and more on personal votes (i.e. when district magnitude is large, e.g. Tokyo) are less constrained by the party label.

As important as electoral system, equally contributing to the significance of local electoral competition derives from the *timing of election*, particularly in relations to national-level electoral competitions. In Tokyo, Metropolitan Assembly election is held separately from the rest of general local elections held every four years, highlighting the inter-connectedness of local and national electoral competitions in Japan's capital. Some argue that the local elections that are held closely to national election often function as 'preliminary' or 'substitute' competition, resembling the inter-party competitions in the national Diet (Horiuchi 2009). On the other hand, when prefectural/municipal assembly elections are held on the same day as gubernatorial election, the local politicians are likely to emphasize their associations with candidates who are most likely to win the race, regardless of the candidate's party affiliation (Sunahara 2010: 96).

Yet the variety of electoral systems alone cannot explain the diversity of individual actors' strategic choices or regional characteristics of local party organizations; it must be contextualized within wider local political landscapes. One of the characteristics of Japan's local politics is that both governor/mayor of local administrative unit and members of local assembly are elected by popular vote (Soga and Machidori 2007: 1-4).¹⁷² It indicates that the governor/mayor and local assembly members may develop diverging interests in order to achieve their political goals, or it is possible that the local assembly members may weigh cooperating with governor/mayor more importantly than protecting party coherence at the local level. In that sense, *types of local governorship* and local inter-party relations must also be taken into consideration in evaluating the local political actors' incentives. For example, during the gubernatorial elections, if the likelihood of the election for the LDP-endorsed candidate is low, the local LDP assembly members may not choose to actively mobilize their personal networks. Or, when the governor in power is not affiliated with the LDP (e.g. Hashimoto Toru and Osaka

¹⁷² So-called the system of double-representative system (*nigendaihyōsei*, 二元代表制)

Restoration Association), the choices of local LDP politicians as well as the Kōmeitō may vary depending on their own perceptions toward the governor as well as the individuals' electoral environment. Sunahara (2010: 95), analyzing why local LDP members often do not engage in collective behaviors, argues that the asymmetric power balance between the governor and local assembly often urge the local assembly members to cooperate with the governor rather than with the party in order to realize their political goals.

2) **Rise of Local Parties in Urban Regions**

As it can be inferred from Sunahara's argument, the criticality of governor-assembly relations is what distinguishes local inter-party relations from national party competition. For that reason, the recent rise of a new type of local governance and governor-led local parties can impose significant challenges to the existing political institutions, inducing drastic reconfiguration of strategic choices among local actors. Recent rise of local parties, which has come to represent the conflicts between the central and local governments, is critical not only for the impact it can impose upon local governance, but also because of the inherent inter-connectedness of the center-local political competitions.

The rise of Osaka Restoration Association, established under the leadership of Governor Hashimoto Toru in April 2010, signaled the arrival of new era in terms of center-local administrative and inter-party conflicts. While the tension between the central government (the LDP) and urban local governments existed long before the births of powerful local parties (as discussed in the second chapter), it was only after the 1990s when this growth-dependent balance began to crack. As the Japanese economy began to stumble and the LDP became no longer able to appease urban dissatisfactions, the LDP-led central government promoted re-modification of local governance and autonomy in the name of 'decentralization reform.' The most symbolic of it was the "Great Merger of Heisei (*heisei no daigappei*)," carried out from the 1990s and most actively under the Koizumi administration (2001-2006). Imai (2008) argues that the fundamental purpose of the LDP government's promotion of municipal mergers was not to salvage economically-

dependent rural regions and promote rationalization of local governance and economy (as the party leaders claimed), but rather to curtail autonomous local governance and accelerate centralization of power to the national party leadership. Put from this perspective, the transformation of local political landscape and deepening center-local cleavages can be interpreted as a backlash against the central government's attempt to put an end to autonomous local governance.¹⁷³ Hijino (2013) argues that, with the economic decline and lesser resources pouring from the state to local governments, the growing conflicts between local assembly members and governors/mayors eventually led to the births of governor/mayor-led local parties that emerged starting in the 2000s. What these newly emerging local political parties have in common is their emphasis on locality as well as detachment from existing (national) political parties (Sunahara and Hijino 2013). The governor-assembly relations, in other words, have been complicated by the replacement of local leadership with the new type of local governors whose autonomy has been expanded. In addition, the local politicians began finding themselves in the pit of dilemma, where they must weigh the balance between powerful local leadership and national Diet members in realizing their political goals. In other words, the rebalancing of center-local relations and the consequent 'denationalization' of local governments, as well as the rise of new type of local leadership led to the reconfiguration of clientalist

¹⁷³ From the outlook, the LDP and central government's effort to centralize party management and local governance structure seems contradictory to the phenomenon of rising local parties and increasing autonomy of local governments. Machidori (2015) points out that such dual nature was what characterized political reform of the 1990s. Specifically, the decentralization reform from the 1990s and onward was characterized by the promotion of administrative autonomy of the local governments, which diminished the central government's authority over the local decision-making processes. At the same time, on the issues of financial independence of the local governments—most notably the local tax allocation system reform—were left half way done. It created a situation where the local leadership has come to enjoy political autonomy from the central government, yet the governance structure remains financially dependent on the state resources, inducing conflicts between leadership and local assembly. In this context, the rise of local parties also relates to the rebalancing of local power relations, and particularly the changing governor-assembly relations. As Machidori (2015) acutely points out, the politically autonomous governors and the prefectural/city assemblies that must rely on financial support from the central government have come to possess diverging political interests and goals that may affect the governor-assembly relations (203-204).

relationship between the national and local politicians that were once characterized as clientalist *keiretsu* relationship (Inoue 1992).

Put from another perspective, the recent rise of local parties led by popular, relatively independent governors has left local political actors sandwiched between clientalist relationship with Diet members, on the one hand, and the growing need for expanding opportunity for profit-sharing with local authority, i.e. the governors, on the other. Sunahara (2012) discusses the three factors that induced the changes in the roles of local politicians after the 1990s reforms. First, socioeconomic environment after the economic bubble burst led to the scarcity of resources for profit-sharing in the traditional clientalist relationship between LDP's national and local politicians. Second, the electoral reform altered how the local politicians interacted with their 'patron' national-level counterparts; while under the old electoral system the question for the local LDP politicians was 'who' to support during national elections, they came to face with the choice of 'whether' to support the one LDP candidate running in their district. Third, decentralization policies and the enhanced authority of the local governors created the new incentive for the local politicians to cultivate closer and more intimate relationship with the local authority, rather than Diet members. In other words, after the 1990s, the role of local LDP politicians as 'intermediary' that connects the Diet members with local interests receded, while the incentive to cultivate deeper relationship with local governors increased.

While these analyses discuss a variety of factors that shape local actors' strategic choices, and hence the institutionalization of local organizations, they are limited to the internal organization of a single political party, or how *individual* politicians develop his/her own strategic choices amid changing governor-assembly relations. In other words, it fails to shed light on the 'interaction' amongst multiple political parties, whose relationships have been complicated by the rise of new political actors. The question this chapter tries to explore is how LDP-Kōmeitō alliance has developed regional characteristics, and what impacts were brought upon them by the rise of local parties. The Kōmeitō's differing reactions to rise of the governor-led local parties in Tokyo and Osaka, along with its strategic choices vis-à-vis the local LDP, must be contextualized

within the development of inter-party relations both at local and central levels, rather than simply assessed as the embodiment of the party's 'survival instinct.' Put from another perspective, 'regional diversity' must be understood as an devise to accommodate divergent local logics in order to allow maximization of electoral as well as political interests.

2. How Local Electoral Institutions Shape Divergent LDP-Kōmeitō Relations in Tokyo and Osaka

Before discussing how the rise of local party brought different impacts upon the LDP-Kōmeitō relations in different regions, it is necessary to evaluate the regional characteristics of the two-party alliance before the emergence of powerful local party. In terms of inter-party relations between the LDP and Kōmeitō, it is not only the institutional settings that affect the local inter-party relations; the parties' dependency levels toward one another, assessed by the local power balance, is critical in shaping the incentives among political parties. This section evaluates how institutional factors—from electoral system, governor-assembly relations, to electoral cycle—as well as the power balance between the LDP and Kōmeitō had shaped the divergent local LDP-Kōmeitō relations in Tokyo and Osaka before the rise of local parties, by looking at both local and national electoral results between 2000 and 2009.

1) Local Electoral Systems and Power Balance of LDP and Kōmeitō in Tokyo and Osaka

As the above hypotheses surmise, the differences in electoral systems are likely to induce diverging inter-party relations on the local level, which can affect the levels of cooperation on the national level between the LDP and the Kōmeitō. The question remains, however, on 'how' the different local electoral systems affect the LDP-Kōmeitō electoral alliance. In order to illustrate how parties adapt to differing electoral systems on the local level, let us compare the electoral systems of prefectural assembly elections in Tokyo and Osaka. For comparative purposes, the analyses will focus only on the 23 special wards in Tokyo and two government-designated cities in Osaka prefecture—Osaka and Sakai Cities.

First and foremost, the most notable differences between the local electoral systems adopted in Tokyo and Osaka's metropolitan/prefectural assembly elections is the district magnitudes. Simply speaking, the local electoral system in Tokyo can be characterized as largely mid-sized multi-member district system, while that of Osaka's is largely characterized by small-sized district system. The total number of Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly members is 127, of which, until 2013, 89 were elected from 23 special ward districts.¹⁷⁴ The district magnitude of each ward district ranges between 1 to 8; in Chiyoda and Chuo wards, only one representative is elected, while Ota and Setagaya wards have the largest district magnitude of eight. Between 2001 and 2013, the Kōmeitō had managed to maintain 20 seats in the 23 special wards, while the LDP's party strength fluctuated between 24 (2009) and 38 (2013). Further, while the LDP fields its candidates in every district, the Kōmeitō takes on the pick-and-choose strategy; except for Arakawa, Kōmeitō does not field its candidates where the district magnitude is two or less, while in districts where magnitude is large, such as Ota, Setagaya, and Adachi, they field multiple candidates. Another striking difference between LDP and Kōmeitō's candidate fielding strategy is that the Kōmeitō elected most of its candidates (20 of 23) in the 23 special ward districts, while the LDP fields about 35% of its candidates outside this central Tokyo region [Appendix 1].

On the other hand, due to the acceleration of municipal mergers and the trend for the reduction of municipal assembly quota, the number of municipal assembly members began to decline rapidly since 2004, and between 2000 and 2013, the total number of municipal assembly members declined by 45% nationwide.¹⁷⁵ Similarly, in Tokyo's 23 special wards areas, the total number of municipal assembly members declined from 973 in 1999 to 902 in 2015 (7.3% decline) [Appendix 2]. While the number of LDP candidates declined accordingly during the same period (-8.3%), however, the Kōmeitō hardly reduced the number of candidates, and, except for 2015, had managed to elect all endorsed candidates. Tokyo's special ward assembly election is characterized by the

¹⁷⁴ Before the 2017 election, district magnitudes for Nakano and Kita wards were reduced by one.

¹⁷⁵ 総務省(2015) 地方議会制度について
http://www.soumu.go.jp/main_content/000390643.pdf

large district magnitude that ranges between 25 to 50; because each special ward has its own independent assembly, the municipal election in Tokyo is held under exceptionally large constituency system.

The resilience of Kōmeitō's party strength in Tokyo's local assemblies becomes even more striking when compared to the case of Osaka, which shows higher susceptibility to the electoral system. In Osaka and Sakai cities,¹⁷⁶ district magnitude for prefectural assembly election in most districts are one or two in each ward (except for Hirano ward between 1999 and 2011, [Appendix 3]). For city assembly elections, the district magnitude remains less than ten in all districts in both cities. Such low district magnitude poses significant limitations to Kōmeitō's fielding strategy. While in Tokyo's 23 special ward districts Kōmeitō manages to field about half the number of LDP candidates, in Osaka City, the ratio of LDP candidates to Kōmeitō's is about 10:3. In Sakai, after the city became a government-designated city in 2006 and began adopting ward-based constituency electoral system, Kōmeitō's seat gain in the city shrank to zero in 2015. Such tendency reconfirms the Kōmeitō's electoral strategy that, for the Kōmeitō, the larger the district magnitude, more candidate it can field/elect in elections.

In fact, Kōmeitō's small number of prefectural assembly members in Osaka does not indicate the party's electoral weakness in the prefecture; what is significant is that, despite lower representation in Osaka, the Kōmeitō's leverage vis-à-vis the LDP is much higher in Osaka than in Tokyo in terms of scales of support bases. [Table V-1] and [Table V-2] show the two parties' total vote gains in two prefectures, for both prefectural and municipal assembly elections. As the [Table V-1] shows, in Tokyo, LDP and Kōmeitō's vote shares are relatively similar in both metropolitan and ward assembly elections. LDP mobilizes about 900,000 to 1,000,000 votes, while Kōmeitō's vote gains hover around 550,000 to 600,000. In Osaka, on the other hand, Kōmeitō's vote gains are much higher in city assembly elections than in prefectural assembly election. Kōmeitō mobilized about 200,000 votes in the prefectural assembly elections in 1999 and 2003, while the number significantly declined after 2007 because of the lower number of PA candidates

¹⁷⁶ Sakai city did not become a government-designated city until 2006, before which the entire city was one district with assigned magnitude of 52 in city assembly elections.

Table V-1 LDP and Kōmeitō's Vote Shares in Local Election in Tokyo (1999-2017)

	2001 MA		2005 MA		2009 MA		2013 MA		2017 MA	
	LDP	Kōmeitō	LDP	Kōmeitō	LDP	Kōmeitō	LDP	Kōmeitō	LDP	Kōmeitō
Turnout	50.22%		44.32%		54.40%		43.61%		51.13%	
Vote Share	35.2%	18.5%	28.0%	21.6%	24.5%	16.1%	35.0%	17.1%	22.5%	15.5%
Vote Gain	1152180	606715	850770	657155	939709	619554	1086304	531682	858752	591584
	1999 WA		2003 WA		2007 WA		2011 WA		2015 WA	
	LDP	Kōmeitō	LDP	Kōmeitō	LDP	Kōmeitō	LDP	Kōmeitō	LDP	Kōmeitō
vote share	31.1%	18.6%	30.3%	20.3%	31.4%	19.1%	30.7%	17.5%	31.3%	16.2%
Vote gain	923161	562202	891136	591177	953069	579906	936976	556989	960898	524363

Table V-2 LDP and Komeito's Vote Shares in Local Election in Osaka (2003-2015)

		2003		2007		2011		2015	
		LDP	Kōmeitō	LDP	Kōmeitō	LDP	Kōmeitō	LDP	Kōmeitō
PA	Osaka City		47.20%		47.16%		49.27%		48.64%
	Vote Count	313118	133984	295423	125464	161933	114736	289043	93345
	Vote Share (%)	34.11%	14.60%	34.60%	14.70%	16.27%	11.53%	29.14%	9.41%
	Turnout (%)		40.87%		49.47%		49.43%		47.86%
CA	Sakai City		70671	103514	42701	83521	18220	87600	0
	Vote Count	48514	70671	103514	42701	83521	18220	87600	0
	Vote Share (%)	19.28%	28.09%	32.71%	13.49%	25.98%	5.67%	28.43%	0.00%
	Turnout (%)		47.21%		46.42%		49.27%		48.64%
	Osaka City		235964	248629.7	224213	178237	215925	198315	190982
	Vote Count	285535	235964	248629.7	224213	178237	215925	198315	190982
	Vote Share (%)	30.35%	25.08%	27.15%	24.48%	17.53%	21.24%	19.59%	18.86%
	Turnout (%)		41.26%		49.48%		49.42%		47.86%
	Sakai City		64364.19	611199.32	82317	43599	70543	56849	54809
	Vote Count	45388	64364.19	611199.32	82317	43599	70543	56849	54809
	Vote Share (%)	17.83%	25.29%	18.86%	26.18%	13.31%	21.54%	17.91%	17.27%

fielded in Sakai, and also lower number of overall candidates due to the reduction of the number of assembly members.¹⁷⁷ In two city assembly elections, on the other hand, the Kōmeitō was able to mobilize as much as 300,000 votes until 2015, when the party's vote gain declined by 13.5% from the previous election. In both Tokyo and Osaka's municipal assembly elections, Kōmeitō's vote gains decreased significantly in 2015, which led to the loss of four seats in Tokyo and Osaka, where the party usually succeeded in electing all endorsed candidates.

The most significant difference between the two parties' support bases in Tokyo and Osaka is the power balance between LDP and Kōmeitō at the lowest strata of politics. Given that, Tokyo metropolitan assembly election is held separately from other general local elections and often becomes the stage for 'preliminary skirmish' of national elections, it is reasonable to assume that, in both Tokyo and Osaka, Kōmeitō's 'bare' supporter strength is most accurately represented in the municipal elections. In other words, the number of those who vote for Kōmeitō in the lowest level of polity can be assumed to range between 500,000 and 550,000 in Tokyo's 23 special wards, and 250,000 and 300,000 in Osaka and Sakai cities. If we estimate the 'bare' support strength of the LDP in Tokyo to be about 1,000,000, then the ratio of the two parties' support bases is about 2 to 1—in other words, LDP holds the absolute supremacy over Kōmeitō. In Osaka, however, even before the rise of the Osaka Restoration Association (ORA), the scales of supporters of the two parties were nearly the same. In 2003, the vote shares of LDP and Kōmeitō in Osaka city assembly election was 30.4% and 25.1%, respectively, and in 2007 it was 27.2% and 24.5%. In Sakai City, the Kōmeitō continued to earn higher number of votes than the LDP until 2015.

Put simply, Kōmeitō holds higher leverage against the LDP in Osaka than it does in Tokyo. It is precisely the reason why in Osaka Kōmeitō is able to field four district candidates during general election, while it fields only one candidate in Tokyo—because of the high competitiveness of the Kōmeitō in Osaka. What is seemingly paradoxical

¹⁷⁷ In June 2011, Osaka Prefectural Assembly passed a resolution of reducing the number of assembly members by 20%. In the following election held in 2015, the total number of seats was reduced from 109 to 88.

about the scales of support bases and party strength in the local assemblies, however, is that, even though Kōmeitō's relative scale of support is higher in Osaka than in Tokyo, in Osaka prefectural assembly election, the party is heavily underrepresented in Osaka. Such regional contrasts suggest the confined nature of Kōmeitō's electoral strategy, which is largely susceptible to the institutional settings of the local electoral competition.

2) **Disengaged Relationship in Tokyo**

One unique aspect that distinguishes Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly election from rest of the local election is the electoral timing. Ever since the Metropolitan Assembly was dissolved mid-term in 1965, the election was held separately from the rest of the general local elections. In 2005 and 2009, the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly elections were held shortly before the Lower House elections, and along with the high publicity and interests, the two local elections were considered to have played the role of 'preliminary skirmish' for the upcoming general election. In fact, Horiuchi (2009) have demonstrated how the Metropolitan Assembly Elections in 2005 and 2009 foreshadowed the Koizumi cabinet's landslide victory in 2005, as well as the DPJ's overthrowing of the LDP rule in 2009.

In such unique local election, LDP and Kōmeitō develops electoral strategy that often place them as 'competitors,' for the Metropolitan Assembly election adopts multi-member district system, whose district magnitudes ranges between 1 to 8 in special ward districts [Appendix 1]. Contrary to Osaka Prefectural Assembly election that adopts small-sized district system, such electoral system allows Kōmeitō to field significant number of candidates, who would compete against LDP candidates. Because of this, the local support bases of the LDP and Kōmeitō developed what seems to be a 'disengaged' relationship. [Table V-3] shows the two parties' vote counts in the 2005 Tokyo metropolitan assembly, along with each party's vote counts earned in the 2003 ward assembly elections, to indicate the scale of 'bare support base' of the two parties. First and foremost, the most striking aspect

Table V-3 Vote counts in local elections (Tokyo, 2005MA & 2003WA)

Turnout (%)	2005 Metropolitan Assembly					2003 Ward Assembly		
	44.32%					43.23% *		
	M	Candidates (elected)		LDP	Kōmeitō	LDP	Kōmeitō	M
Vote share (%)		LDP	Kōmeitō	27.98%	21.62%	30.28%	20.33%	
Chiyoda	1	1 (1)	0	8,770		8,214	1,260	25
Chuo	1	1 (1)	0	16,416		15,786	6,220	30
Minato	2	1 (1)	0	16,216		14,331	8,716	34
Shinjuku	4	1 (1)	1 (1)	27,851	22,984	20,409	21,020	38
Bunkyo	2	1 (0)	0	17,008		9,431	11,754	34
Taito	2	1 (1)	0	26,244		21,248	10,160	34
Sumida	3	2 (1)	1 (1)	34,202	27,165	38,942	18,194	34
Koto	4	1 (1)	1 (1)	38,337	36,937	36,502	33,837	44
Shinagawa	4	2 (2)	1 (1)	41,195	27,729	37,633	22,982	42
Meguro	3	1 (1)	1 (1)	19,532	22,749	21,230	13,618	36
Ota	8	3 (3)	2 (2)	70,142	60,939	76,851	53,184	50
Setagaya	8	3 (2)	2 (2)	75,996	56,828	76,395	43,020	52
Shibuya	2	1 (1)	0	17,849		19,509	10,162	34
Nakano	4	2 (1)	1 (1)	32,507	26,221	31,580	19,700	42
Suginami	6	2 (1)	1 (1)	37,883	29,799	36,976	23,279	48
Toshima	3	1 (1)	1 (1)	18,480	21,912	27,045	16,591	38
Kita	4	1 (1)	1 (1)	24,133	31,770	38,365	28,446	44
Arakawa	2	1 (1)	1 (1)	16,720	25,405	25,425	14,526	32
Itabashi	5	2 (1)	1 (1)	47,034	43,433	53,202	39,067	50
Nerima	6	2 (2)	1 (1)	58,868	52,776	67,871	46,723	50
Adachi	6	3 (2)	2 (2)	93,074	71,983	94,407	58,931	50
Katsushika	4	2 (2)	1 (1)	53,053	42,267	57,430	35,878	46
Edogawa	5	2 (1)	1 (1)	59,260	56,258	62,353	53,911	46
TOTAL	89	37 (29)	20 (20)	850,770	657,155	891,136	591,177	933
*Turnout (%) for ward assembly election only reflects those that were held during the general local election. Ward assembly elections for Adachi and Katsushika wards were not held on the same day, therefore it is not included in the total turnout.								

is the Kōmeitō's high vote collecting capability during Metropolitan Assembly election. The Kōmeitō increased its vote counts by 11.2% between the two elections, despite the fact that the party did not field any candidate in six ward districts. Such significant vote counts of the Kōmeitō can partially be explained by the weight of Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly election, which is considered as 'the second most important election after national election' for the Kōmeitō supporters.

Secondly, in terms of local LDP-Kōmeitō relations, it is difficult to find any traces of 'electoral cooperation' between the two parties in the same way we find during national elections. In other words, even when there is no Kōmeitō candidate in the district, it does not appear that Kōmeitō voters voted for the LDP candidates by default, such as the cases of Chiyoda, Chuo, Minato, Taito, and Shibuya wards indicate. In those districts, LDP only fields one candidate and Kōmeitō had none. Yet the vote counts for the LDP candidates do not show significant change from the 'party votes' of ward assembly election. Such 'disengagement' between the support bases of LDP and Kōmeitō during local election derives from unique institutional settings in Tokyo. Not only does the prefectural-level electoral system induces personal support cultivation' among LDP candidates, but also the exceptionally high district magnitudes of Tokyo ward assembly elections that range between 25 to 50 are likely to hinder the integration of 'LDP voters' into a single support base. Such 'decentralized' nature of LDP's local party organization in Tokyo, as well as the Kōmeitō's incentives to elect as many candidates under the multi-member district system, seems to encourage the strategic disengagement toward one another at local level.

Such disengagement also derives from the lesser degree of dependence between the LDP and Kōmeitō during local elections. Compared to the case of Osaka, the electoral system adopted in metropolitan and ward assembly elections in Tokyo allows Kōmeitō to elect a significant number of its own candidates, because of the lower election threshold and high concentration of supporters in the prefecture. In fact, the two parties' vote gains in the past Metropolitan Assembly elections illuminates the

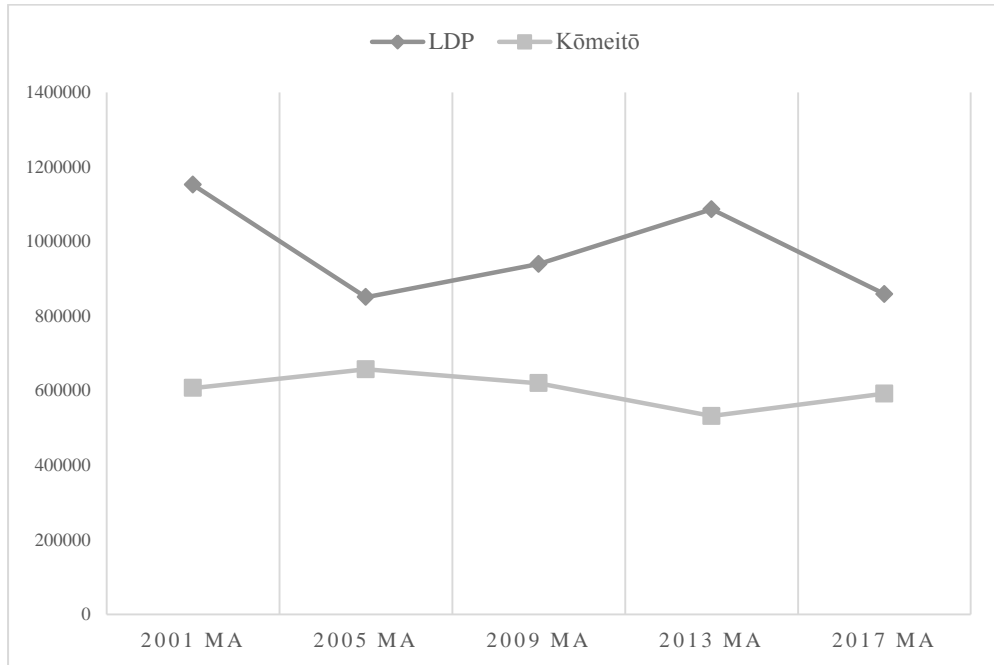


Figure V-1 LDP and Kōmeitō's Vote Gains in Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly Elections (2001-2017)

‘disengaged’ posture of the two support bases. As shown in [Figure V-1], the number of votes two parties mobilize during prefectural-level election bears an inverse relation to one another; when LDP’s vote counts increases, that of Kōmeitō’s decrease; when it decreases, Kōmeitō increases its vote gains. Such trend is indicative of the fact that, while the LDP’s performance in the local election in Tokyo is affected by the performance of the national government to a significant degree, the Kōmeitō is relatively unfettered by the reputation of the national coalition partner and is able to maintain electoral coherence. It explains why Ota Akihiro, who runs in Tokyo District 12, was hardly affected by the rise of DPJ in terms of vote gains, while four Kōmeitō candidates in Osaka suffered from significant vote losses in 2009 general election.¹⁷⁸

3) **Interlinked Alliance in Osaka**

The ‘disengaged’ posture of local LDP-Kōmeitō relations in Tokyo becomes even more striking when compared to the case of Osaka, where the two parties display ‘interlinked’ voting patterns during local and national elections. First, it is possible to observe relatively As demonstrated in the previous section, and also shown in [Table V-4] below, the Kōmeitō mobilizes higher number of votes during city assembly elections than it does in the prefectural assembly election in Osaka. Such phenomenon is again the product of institutional constraints imposed by small district magnitudes. During the prefectural assembly election held in 2007, in Osaka City, Kōmeitō fielded total of six candidates in 24 electoral districts whose magnitude ranges between 1 to 3, while in Sakai it fielded two candidates in six districts with district magnitude of 1 or 2. Among them, LDP and Kōmeitō both fielded its candidates only in 4 districts, Yodogawa, Sumiyoshi, Higashi Sumiyoshi, and Hirano, where the two parties both succeeded in electing their candidates. What is significant in the case of Osaka prefectural assembly election is that, unlike Tokyo, the LDP’s vote counts are higher in prefectural assembly

¹⁷⁸ As discussed in Chapter IV, Ota Akihiro’s vote loss between 2005 and 2009 general elections was less than 1%, while four candidates in Osaka lost average of 15% of absolute vote gains.

Table V-4 LDP and Komeito's Vote Counts in Osaka Local Assembly Elections (2007)

	Turnout (%)	2007 PA					2007 CA		
		M	47.16%				46.42%		M
			#Candidate (Elected)	LDP	Kōmeitō		LDP	Kōmeitō	
	Vote Share (%)		LDP	Kōmeitō	34.60%	14.70%	27.58%	24.48%	
OSAKA CITY	Kita	1	1 (1)	0	19,745	-	7,425	7,933	3
	Miyakojima	1	0	0	-	-	10,767	8,757	3
	Fukushima	1	1 (1)	0	12,928	-	6,069	-	2
	Konohana	1	1 (1)	0	10,094	-	NV	NV	3
	Chuo	1	1 (1)	0	12,523	-	10,050	-	2
	Nishi	1	1 (1)	0	NV	-	11,326	-	2
	Minato	1	1 (1)	0	19,442	-	7,336	10,325	3
	Taisho	1	0	0	-	-	6,503	10,383	3
	Tennoji	1	1 (0)	0	8,722	-	5,484	-	2
	Naniwa	1	1 (1)	0	NV	-	4,311	-	2
	Nishi Yodogawa	1	1 (1)	0	19,742	-	10,281	11,600	3
	Yodogawa	2	1 (1)	1 (1)	16,970	21,953	14,777	16,729	5
	Higashi Yodogawa	2	0	1 (1)	-	22,407	10,691	16,368	6
	Higashinari	1	1 (1)	0	14,728	-	5,864	8,049	3
	Ikuno	2	1 (1)	0	16,851	-	14,306	9,940	5
	Asashi	2	1 (1)	0	-	-	5,996	9,376	4
	Joto	2	1 (1)	0	24,260	-	14,882	13,605	5
	Turumi	1	1 (1)	0	17,870	-	6,685	12,679	3
	Abeno	1	1 (1)	0	22,826	-	15,297	8,971	4
	Suminoe	2	1 (1)	0	25,033	-	9,728	15,359	4
	Sumiyoshi	2	1 (1)	1 (1)	18,991	20,267	14,212	14,761	6
	Higashi Sumiyoshi	2	1 (1)	1 (1)	14,346	17,361	16,901	13,803	5
	Hirano	3	1 (1)	1 (1)	20,352	24,825	23,534	22,782	6
	Nishinari	2	0	1 (1)	-	18,651	16,205	12,793	5
	TOTAL	35	19 (18)	6 (6)	295,423	125,464	248,630	224,213	89
SAKAI CITY	Turnout (%)		49.47%				49.48%		
	Sakai	2	1 (0)	1 (1)	16,802	19,356	11,830	14,716	9
	Naka	1	1 (1)	0	22,105	-	9,331	11,720	8
	Higashi (+Mihara)	1	1 (1)	0	23,527	-	9,021	8,819	5
	Nishi	2	1 (1)	0	19,797	-	9,501	10,631	8
	Minami	2	0	1 (1)	-	23,345	9,709	14,155	10
	Kita	2	1 (1)	0	21,283	-	8,208	17,820	9
	TOTAL	10	5 (4)	2 (2)	103,514	42,701	57,600	77,861	99

election than in city assembly elections—in 2007, it was 18.2% higher in Osaka City and 79.7% in Sakai City. If we consider that the LDP's vote gains in city assembly elections to represent the total number of 'personal votes' cultivated by the local LDP politicians, in such districts as Tsurumi, Kita, Minato, Higashinari, among others, LDP's vote gains are significantly higher than in city assembly election. On the other hand, in district where Kōmeitō fielded its candidates, such as Sumiyoshi, Yodogawa, Hirano, and Higashi Sumiyoshi, the LDP's vote increases were insignificant. Such tendency does not necessarily imply that there exists explicit 'electoral alliance' between the LDP and the Kōmeitō in those districts where Kōmeitō does not field its candidates; voting decisions may well have been made by the method of elimination, particularly because LDP's major opponents in those districts were DPJ or JCP candidates.¹⁷⁹ On the other hand, however, it is also noteworthy that the LDP's vote gains were much higher (compared to city assembly elections) in those districts where LDP's largest opponent was a DPJ candidate, such as Suminoe, Joto, Abeno, and Sakai's Higashi (+Mihara), Kita, Naka, and Nishi districts.¹⁸⁰ Put simply, in Osaka, the small district magnitude, as well as the relatively tenacious JCP support base, who can muster as many votes as 230,000 in Osaka and 68,000 in Sakai, provide incentives for the Kōmeitō supporters to vote for the LDP candidates, even without promises of electoral return.¹⁸¹

The 'interlinked' nature of electoral performance by the LDP and Kōmeitō at the local level, as well as the high dependency level between the two parties in Osaka, echoes during general election as well. In Osaka and Sakai's eight single-member districts, LDP and Kōmeitō equally shares number of 'territories,' unlike in Tokyo's urban region where Kōmeitō is only conceded one of seventeen single-member districts. Further, while the LDP managed to mobilize more than twice as many PR votes in the 2003 general election in Tokyo's urban districts, in Osaka, the LDP earned merely 18.5% more votes than the Kōmeitō.¹⁸² Such number indicates that as many as 50% of votes

¹⁷⁹ In Tsurumi, Kita, Minato, Higashinari, and Nishi Yodogawa, the JCP candidates finished in the second place.

¹⁸⁰

¹⁸¹ Kōmeitō's antagonistic relationship with JCP?

¹⁸² In 2003 general election, LDP earned 1,294,136 PR votes while Kōmeitō gained 545,723

LDP and Kōmeitō candidates mobilize during general elections in Osaka comes from coalition partner, making it virtually impossible to elect their own candidates without the other. In other words, the power balance between the two parties is more equal in Osaka than in Tokyo, inducing higher leverage of Kōmeitō vis-à-vis the LDP in the region. Because of the high dependency of the Kōmeitō on LDP, and vice versa, during general elections, it is possible to assume that the LDP-Kōmeitō alliance in Osaka is characterized by ‘interlinkage,’ where Kōmeitō’s electoral coherence becomes susceptible to the LDP’s overall political and electoral performance at local and national levels.

Such diverging patterns of LDP-Kōmeitō relations in Tokyo and Osaka, characterized by ‘disengagement’ and ‘interlinkage,’ developed as the results of not only distinct electoral systems but also from the differences in the local power balances between the two parties. The question the rest of this chapter will explore is how such various local ‘foundations’ of LDP-Kōmeitō alliance played the key role in shaping distinct reactions to the new political phenomenon that swept through the most populated regions in Japan—the rise of local parties.

3. The Rise of ORA and Alteration of LDP-Kōmeitō Alliance

1) Rise of ORA and Kōmeitō’s Dilemma

In February 2008, Hashimoto Toru, a television talent lawyer who had been known for his robust and outspoken personality, ran for the governor of Osaka after Ota Fusae, LDP/Kōmeitō-endorsed former governor stepped down because of personal political money scandals. Having won 54% of vote share, Hashimoto began taking on a drastic reform measures which focused on enhancing autonomous local governance. In June, he announced a project team guideline “Osaka Restoration Program,” which included the budget cuts of worth JPY 110 billion, whose major target was the employment cost for public offices including the police, and subsidies for private schools and organizations.

in Tokyo’s seventeen districts; in Osaka, the two parties earned 331,384 and 279,695 votes, respectively.

Announcing “Emergency Declaration for Education” in September, he began weighing in to the area of education, directly appointing board members for prefectural education committee. These and other drastic measures were a part of “Osaka Metropolitan Concept” (*Oosaka toshi kōsō*), which became synonymous for ORA’s drastic policy suggestions (Hashimoto and Sakaiya 2011).

The local LDP-Kōmeitō relations in Tokyo and Osaka encountered a critical juncture with the rise of local party. In many respects, the Osaka Restoration Association (ORA) was a game-changer. Launched by Hashimoto Toru in April 2010, the founding members of the ORA consisted largely of former LDP assembly members who had been sandwiched between powerful and popular governor and the resistant LDP Osaka *kenren* (Iida 2016). In the first comprehensive election held in April 2011, which the ORA called “Osaka Spring Campaign (*oosaka haru no jin*),” the new-born party won a simple majority single-handedly, by securing 57 of 109 prefectural assembly seats. The LDP, who had secured 45 in the previous election in 2007 and formed a ruling coalition with the Kōmeitō’s twenty-three representatives, suddenly found itself poorly armed with 13 seats in the prefectural assembly, while the Kōmeitō managed to secure 21. The absolute vote gains of the LDP dropped by 38.5% between 2007 and 2011, while the ORA mustered 1,267,695 votes in the entire Osaka prefecture. The LDP-Kōmeitō coalition governance in Osaka was replaced with the ORA’s ‘one-party dominance’ overnight ([Table V-5]). To Kōmeitō’s shock, the party lost a seat in Izumi City District (M2) to an ORA candidate, losing 14.3% of votes from the previous 2007 prefectural assembly election.¹⁸³

Things were even made more complicated by the result of city assembly elections held the same day. In the Osaka and Sakai city assemblies, the LDP-Kōmeitō coalition managed to win against the ORA, even though it fell short of holding simple majorities ([Table V-6]). In a way, the election results created ‘twisted local assemblies’ between LDP-Kōmeitō coalition and the ORA. While in prefectural assembly the ORA succeeded

¹⁸³ In 2007, the Kōmeitō candidate who ran in Izumi City District (M2) earned 22,181 votes, but decreased its vote counts to 19,015 in 2011, losing to an independent candidate who ended up second place by mere 31 votes.

Table V-5 Election Results of Osaka Prefectural Assembly Elections (2007, 2011)

	LDP	KÔMEITÔ	DPJ	JCP	OTHERS	ORA
2007 PA	765,464	484,206	478,143	538,422	347,368	NA
#SEAT	45	23	19	10	14	NA
2011 PA	470,401	451,846	376,383	361,792	191,014	1,267,695
#SEAT	13	21	10	4	4	57
SOURCE: OSAKA ELECTION COMMISSION						

Table V-6 Electoral results of 2011 city assembly elections (Osaka, Sakai)

	LDP	Kōmeitō	DPJ	JCP	ORA	Independent	Total
Osaka	17	19	8	8	33	1	86
Sakai	7	12	5	8	13	7	52

succeeded in establishing solid supremacy, in city assemblies, there was room for coalition negotiation. The reason why the power balance in the city assemblies was critical was because, in order to realize Osaka Metropolitan Plan (*oosaka toshi kōsō*), ORA's signature bill which Hashimoto had advocated ever since he became the governor of Osaka, required the city assembly to pass the related bills before holding referendum to deliver the dissolution of government-designated city and the establishment of 'special wards' instead. In other words, despite its dominance in the prefectural assembly, the ORA needed cooperation from other parties in the government-designated city assemblies.

It is not difficult to imagine the impact which the rise of ORA imposed upon the local LDP-Kōmeitō relationship in Osaka. The most obvious damage, as seen in the result of the local election, was the dismantlement of LDP who had been downscaled to the third party in the assembly; in fact, even the Kōmeitō held the upper hand in terms of party strength vis-à-vis the LDP. At the same time, the Kōmeitō had plenty of reason to feel nervous as well. Not only was it no longer needed to supplement

the ruling coalition, the Kōmeitō could not overlook the fact that the local collusion with the LDP would possibly become the double-edged sword for the future general election, should the ORA's popularity persevered in Osaka. Despite its well-deserved credit "*jōshō Kansai* (ever-winning Kansai)," Kōmeitō had lost all four districts in the 2009 election to DPJ, exposing the vulnerability of Kōmeitō candidates whose elections were only made possible because of the well-established cooperative mechanism with the LDP. To make things worse, with the ORA in the picture, its capability to muster larger number of votes than the combined LDP and Kōmeitō votes could pose a serious threat to the Kōmeitō, devastating the results of future general election once again. In other words, Kōmeitō found itself in a dilemma where it cannot sever the relationship with the LDP, yet at the same time it could not afford to openly confront the ORA.

The Kōmeitō's concern derived also from the fact that the significant portion of ORA's support base was largely drawn from the LDP's, who is, after all, one of the critical electoral resources for Kōmeitō's four district candidates during national election in Osaka. In 2009, about 60% of four Kōmeitō candidates' vote gains in single-member districts came from the LDP supporters.¹⁸⁴ [Table V-7] shows the vote counts (share, %) in Osaka prefectural assembly elections held in 2007 and 2011 by party, along with the estimation of the percentage of 'defected votes' from the existing parties to the ORA in 2011, based on the assumption that all 'new voters,' who did not vote in 2007 but voted in 2011, voted for the new party in 2011. It can be inferred that that most ORA votes came from LDP and DPJ, along with the support from 'new voters.'¹⁸⁵ Such defection of LDP votes was only natural, considering that a significant number of ORA's prefectural assembly candidates defected from the LDP. In Osaka and Sakai Cities alone, of twenty-nine ORA candidates, ten of them were former LDP candidates who had run in the same districts with different party label four years earlier. Apparently, their change of clothes

¹⁸⁴ The total vote counts of Kōmeitō candidates in four districts in Osaka (3, 5, 6, and 16) was 38,944, while the LDP's PR vote gains in the respective districts were 249,465, marking the 64.5% of vote gains earned by Kōmeitō candidates.

¹⁸⁵ Though JCP's vote counts also declined rather significantly (22.4%), it can be assumed to have been caused by the in the number of candidates between 2007 (45 candidates) and 2011 (38 candidates).

Table V-7 Vote Counts in Osaka Prefectural Assembly Election by Party (2007, 2011)

	2007 PA	VOTE SHARE (%)	2011 PA	VOTE SHARE (%)	VOTE INCREASE (2007-2011)	ESTIMATED VOTE RELOCATION TO JRP
LDP	765463.999	29.3%	470401.154	15.1%	-295062.845	37.4%
DPJ	478143	18.3%	376383.712	12.1%	-101759.288	12.9%
KÔMEITÔ	484206	18.5%	451846	14.5%	-32360	4.1%
JCP	538422	20.6%	361792	11.6%	-176630	22.4%
SDP	19475	0.7%	9709	0.3%	-9766	1.2%
INDEPENDENT	327893	12.5%	153764	4.9%	-174129	22.0%
OTHER	0		4212	0.1%	4212	
YOUR PARTY	0		23329	0.7%	23329	
JRP	0		1267695.131	40.6%	1267695.131	
TOTAL	2613602.999	100.0%	3119131.997	100.0%	505528.998	

worked advantageously for their vote counts: Their absolute vote gains increased by 27.6% between 2007 and 2011.¹⁸⁶

Kōmeitō's apprehension became a reality when the ORA, joined by a few defector representatives from LDP, DPJ, and Your Party, along with The Spirit of Japan Party (*nippon soushin tou*) and Ishihara Shintaro's Sunrise Party of Japan (*taiyōno tou*), declared to advance into national politics in September 2012 in an anticipation of upcoming general election. The question is how such complex local posture among three parties—LDP, Kōmeitō, and the JRP—in Osaka and Tokyo came to affect the LDP-Kōmeitō relations on the national level. As the following sections try to illuminate, the operational logics of Kōmeitō surrounding the allocation of electoral resources among LDP, JRP, and Kōmeitō were characterized by discreet and selective differentiation of regional interests in Osaka, while in Tokyo the LDP-Kōmeitō alliance remained complaisant during national elections.

2) 'Selective Cooperation' in Osaka

From the result of the prefectural assembly election, it was quite clear to all involved parties that, should the ORA/JRP decided to field its candidates in Osaka against Kōmeitō, the Kōmeitō would have little chance of winning—a political chance they could not take. On the other hand, the ORA/JRP leadership had reasons not to antagonize Kōmeitō, from whom they needed cooperation in Osaka and Sakai City assemblies in order to pass legislations for the dissolution of government-designated cities. With such mutual expectations for future cooperation, the ORA/JRP and Kōmeitō landed on pre-electoral coordination before the 2012 general election. In the 2012 general election, the JRP fielded 151 district candidates nationwide, yet in Osaka, where it could expect the largest wins, the party withdrew from four districts where Kōmeitō fields its candidates.¹⁸⁷ Instead, the JRP gave recommendations to four Kōmeitō

¹⁸⁶ Total vote counts of nine ORA candidates who defected the LDP and ran in the 2011 prefectural assembly election as ORA candidates in Osaka and Sakai Cities 168,744 in 2007 and 215,312 in 2011. It does not include the vote gain of ORA candidate Yokoura Yasuyuki, who was elected from Osaka Nishi District without voting in 2007.

¹⁸⁷ JRP also did not field its candidate in Osaka District 12, where the party agreed upon a

candidates. Such JRP's excessive concession led people to believe that the Kōmeitō must have agreed on holding the city referendums regarding the dismissal of government-designated cities in Osaka and Sakai city assemblies.¹⁸⁸ What needs to be emphasized here is that such inter-party arrangement between the Kōmeitō and ORA/JRP in Osaka was only possible because of the diverging perceptions toward electoral and political benefits. Simply put, while Kōmeitō's utmost objective was to retake four single-member districts in Osaka, that of ORA/JRP's was to pave the way for local referendum, which, after all, was the essence of its political identity. Such 'assorting' of national and local objectives functioned as the key apparatus through which the allocation of electoral resources was adjusted.

At the same time, the Kōmeitō showed restraint on the degree of cooperation toward the LDP in Osaka through two critical means. First, the Kōmeitō reduced the number of recommendations for fifteen LDP candidates from thirteen in 2009 to nine in 2012. While three of five new LDP candidates did not receive recommendations from the Kōmeitō, some experienced LDP candidates, who had received recommendation from the Kōmeitō in the past, also did not.¹⁸⁹ Even though the lack of recommendation does not necessarily indicate the absence of cooperation, the Kōmeitō had reasons not to antagonize the JRP by displaying excessive support for the LDP. The Kōmeitō's fear for the JRP's advancement in Osaka was founded on the results of local elections held in April 2011. The ORA's total vote gains in the prefectural assembly election in Osaka and Sakai cities exceeded 550,000 votes, about 30% higher than that of aggregate vote gains of the LDP and the Kōmeitō in the same local election. Even though the LDP-Kōmeitō alliance earned higher number of votes than the ORA in the city assembly elections, it was largely due to the multi-member district system that allows relatively candid representation of supporters. That the ORA performed overwhelmingly in the electoral system with small district magnitude foreshadowed the difficulty which the LDP-Kōmeitō alliance was likely to face under the single-member competition in national

pre-electoral coordination with Your Party.

¹⁸⁸ Nakano (2016: 220-222)

¹⁸⁹ For example, Yamawaki Nobuko (Osaka 11) and Okashita Nobuko (Osaka 17)

election.

Second, the Kōmeitō showed ‘selective’ behaviors in the levels of electoral mobilization for the LDP candidates in Osaka. In terms of the overall result, despite the ‘landslide’ victory of the LDP who secured 237 of 300 single-member districts nationwide, in Osaka, only three of fourteen LDP candidates won the competitions. Kōmeitō successfully reclaimed four seats they had previously occupied before 2009, while the ORA monopolized the rest. The vote counts reflected the severity of LDP-Kōmeitō’s position in the prefecture. The PR vote gains of the LDP declined by 13.9% between 2009 and 2012, while the Kōmeitō also lost 17.5%. The coalition’s losses of ‘second votes’ seemed to have led directly to the ORA’s high vote counts in PR, which exceeded 600,000 votes—higher than the aggregate vote gains of the LDP-Kōmeitō coalition ([**Table V-8**]).

It turned out that the Kōmeitō supporters remained loyal to the local-level cooperative framework defined by the recommendation system. Simply speaking, whether Kōmeitō engaged in a full cooperation with the LDP candidates in Osaka depended largely on whether or not he/she received ‘recommendation’ from the Kōmeitō and the LDP and Kōmeitō agreed to carry out electoral cooperation. When the LDP candidate did not receive recommendation, on the other hand, the level of ‘cooperation’ remained relatively low. [**Table V-9**] compares the electoral results in four single-member districts in Osaka, in which LDP fielded its candidates. While those who

Table V-8 Vote gains in Osaka (Osaka & Sakai cities)

	Turnout	LDP	Kōmeitō	ORA/JRP
2012 PR	53%	336,514	272,223	609,756
2011 PA	49%	254,454	132,956	553,707
2011 CA	49%	222,435	315,841	430,068

Table V-9 Result of LDP Candidates in Osaka 1, 2, 4, and 17

	SMD	PR			Diff.		SMD
	LDP (A)	LDP	Kōmeitō	Total (B)	(A)-(B)	Rec.	JRP
Osaka D1	55,039	47,945	27,770	75,715	-20,676	X	66,330
Osaka D2	80,817	42,693	35,296	77,989	2,828	O	69,200
Osaka D4	89,894	54,061	30,551	84,612	5,282	O	95,452
Osaka D17	52,634	36,317	28,190	64,507	-11,873	X	81,663

Table V-10 Kōmeitō's Vote Gains in PR (2009, 2012) and 2011 City Assembly Election

	2009 PR	2012 PR	INCREASE (%)	2011 CA
OSAKA 17	32,891	28,190	-14.3%	32,215
OSAKA 4	35,793	30,551	-14.6%	35,385
OSAKA 1	32,775	27,770	-15.3%	18,629
OSAKA 2	42,297	35,296	-16.6%	41,337
OSAKA 6*	52,681	43,207	-18.0%	55,603
OSAKA 3*	47,702	38,727	-18.8%	48,091
OSAKA 16*	36,337	29,266	-19.5%	34,596
OSAKA 5*	49,357	39,216	-20.5%	49,985
TOTAL	329,833	272,223	-17.5%	315,841

received Kōmeitō's recommendations (Districts 2 and 4) mobilized as many votes as the aggravate number of PR votes earned by the LDP and the Kōmeitō, those who did not—Districts 1 and 17—earned significantly less number of votes than they could have, if all 'party votes' were casted for the LDP candidates. Such contrasting results between those who received Kōmeitō's recommendation and those who did not indicate how Kōmeitō is able to operate under selective cooperation mechanism, balancing between the old-time friend and the new rising star.

The 'selectiveness' of Kōmeitō's vote mobilization can also be observed in the Kōmeitō's vote losses in PR. Kōmeitō's PR votes in Osaka's eight districts decreased rather significantly between 2009 and 2012 elections by average of 17.5%. Such significant drop of 'party votes' was more drastic than the decrease of LDP's PR votes in the same districts, which marked the average of 13.9% decline.¹⁹⁰ Particularly, Kōmeitō's vote losses in PR tier were more significant in four districts where Kōmeitō fielded its candidates than those districts where LDP candidates competed against JRP ([Table V-10]). Such tendency suggests a few possible explanations. First, the Kōmeitō's loss of PR votes can simply imply its declining support base in Osaka. However, it is difficult to find any other trace of significant decline of Kōmeitō's support base in Osaka: as the table above indicates, in the 2011 city assembly elections, Kōmeitō mobilized almost the same scale of supporters as it did in the 2009 general election in Osaka and Sakai cities. More plausible explanation to the Kōmeitō's losses of PR votes in Osaka is that the Kōmeitō supporters engaged in 'split voting' between single-member districts and PR tier, where a significant number of Kōmeitō supporters voted for JRP in return for their withdrawal from Kōmeitō-endorsed districts.

In other words, the Kōmeitō's 'selective' behaviors consisted of two aspects of vote mobilization. First, by utilizing the 'recommendation system,' Kōmeitō is able to discriminate LDP candidates between those who received recommendation from the Kōmeitō and those who did not, and adjust the levels of vote mobilization. Put another way, the 'recommendation' system functions as a viable signaling sign to achieve

¹⁹⁰ LDP's PR vote gains in 2009 and 2012 general elections in the eight districts in Osaka were 390,749 and 336,514, respectively.

strategic vote allocation. Second, the electoral results in PR tier in the 2012 general election suggests a possibility that the Kōmeitō is taking full advantage of two-vote system, where it allows the ‘discreet’ vote-sharing with other political parties than the LDP. The rise of new, popular parties has generated the necessity for the Kōmeitō to relinquish accustomed logics under the LDP-DPJ dichotomy and instead take on new strategy for multi-player games.

3) **Complaisant Cooperation in Tokyo against JRP**

Such ‘selectiveness’ of Kōmeitō’s behaviors in Osaka becomes even more striking when compared to the case of Tokyo, where Kōmeitō essentially gave cold-shoulder to the JRP. Ishihara Shintaro, former governor of Tokyo of more than twelve years, had assumed the party leadership of JRP as his Sunrise Party of Japan dissolved and joined the JRP. In Tokyo, the JRP fielded nineteen candidates in Tokyo’s twenty-five single-member districts, yet, unlike in Osaka, the JRP failed to secure a single seat in Tokyo, while the LDP-Kōmeitō alliance secured twenty-two seats. The most apparent difference between the JRP candidates who ran in Tokyo and those in Osaka was their vote consolidation rate (CR) in each of the respective districts. While four JRP candidates who ran against LDP candidates in Osaka Districts 1, 2, 4, and 17 mobilized 100.4% of votes earned in the respective PR tier, in Tokyo, eleven JRP candidates who competed against LDP candidates in the Special Ward districts, mobilized only 85.2% ([**Table IV-11**]).¹⁹¹ On the other hand, the vote consolidation rate among eleven LDP candidates reached 105.4%, demonstrating high coherence of LDP-Kōmeitō alliance against the JRP. Such result indicates that the JRP candidates’ vote mobilizations were limited in Tokyo, while the party was able to earn the people’s ‘second vote’ (party vote) through PR system in 2012. The lack of significant ‘defection’ of LDP-Kōmeitō votes to JRP candidates indicate that, in Tokyo, LDP-Kōmeitō alliance remained stable compared to

¹⁹¹ The eleven districts were: Tokyo 1, 2, 4-7, 11, 13, 14, 16, 17. The total vote counts of JRP candidates in those single-member districts were 503,869, while the party’s vote gains in respective PR tier was 591,084. In Osaka, the total vote counts of four JRP candidates in Districts 1, 2, 4, and 17 were 312,645 in single-member districts, and the party earned the total of 311,329 in respective PR tier.

Table V-11 LDP and JRP's Consolidation Rate (CR) in Tokyo SMDs in 2012 LH election

2012 LH	LDP			JRP		
	SMD	PR (LDP+Kōmeitō)	CR (%)	SMD	PR	CR (%)
Tokyo 1*	82013	98992	82.8%	48083	59603	80.7%
Tokyo 2*	84663	88963	95.2%	38564	54766	70.4%
Tokyo 4	96810	94020	103.0%	44999	53128	84.7%
Tokyo 5	85408	90930	93.9%	45518	57283	79.5%
Tokyo 6	98112	94389	103.9%	52734	60707	86.9%
Tokyo 7	79048	87165	90.7%	45556	54499	83.6%
Tokyo 11	116521	93461	124.7%	49334	52466	94.0%
Tokyo 13	115797	91228	126.9%	46947	48660	96.5%
Tokyo 14	90608	81127	111.7%	40312	44834	89.9%
Tokyo 16*	95222	99484	95.7%	46537	54139	86.0%
Tokyo 17	131471	100651	130.6%	45285	50999	88.8%
TOTAL	1075673	1020410	105.4%	503869	591084	85.2%

*New candidates

Table V-12 LDP and JIP's Consolidation Rate (CR) in Tokyo SMDs in 2014 LH election

2014 LH	LDP			JIP			Candidate's former affiliation
	SMD	PR (LDP+Kōmeitō)	CR (%)	SMD	PR	CR (%)	
Tokyo 2	103954	104984	99.0%	44550	41557	107.2%	Your Party
Tokyo 6	110872	103661	107.0%	88915	46983	189.2%	Your Party
Tokyo 9	123368	105678	116.7%	65809	37795	174.1%	TPJ
Tokyo 15	85714	98301	87.2%	88507	43417	203.9%	Your Party
Tokyo 16	98536	108612	90.7%	56701	35168	161.2%	TPJ
Tokyo 17	125351	110857	113.1%	46156	33466	137.9%	--
TOTAL	647795	632093	102.5%	390638	238386	163.9%	

TPJ: Tomorrow Party of Japan

Osaka. Though some candidates, such as those who ran in Tokyo Districts 1, 2, and 16, recorded relatively lower consolidation rate, it was due to their lack of experience in running in the respective districts as ‘new candidates.’

Such ‘resilience’ of LDP-Kōmeitō alliance in Tokyo was also observed in the following general election held in 2014. In early 2014, the JRP was reorganized as Japan Innovation Party (*ishinno tou*, JIP), after merging with Unity Party (*yuino tou*)—a splinter party from Your Party led by Eda Kenji. In that process, the Ishihara group, opposing to the merger with Eda group of Your Party, defected from the JRP and formed Party of Future Generation (*jisedaino tou*). Due to merger with other minor parties, five of six JIP candidates who ran in districts in Tokyo in 2014 were so-called crossover candidates, who had run in the respective districts in the past under different party

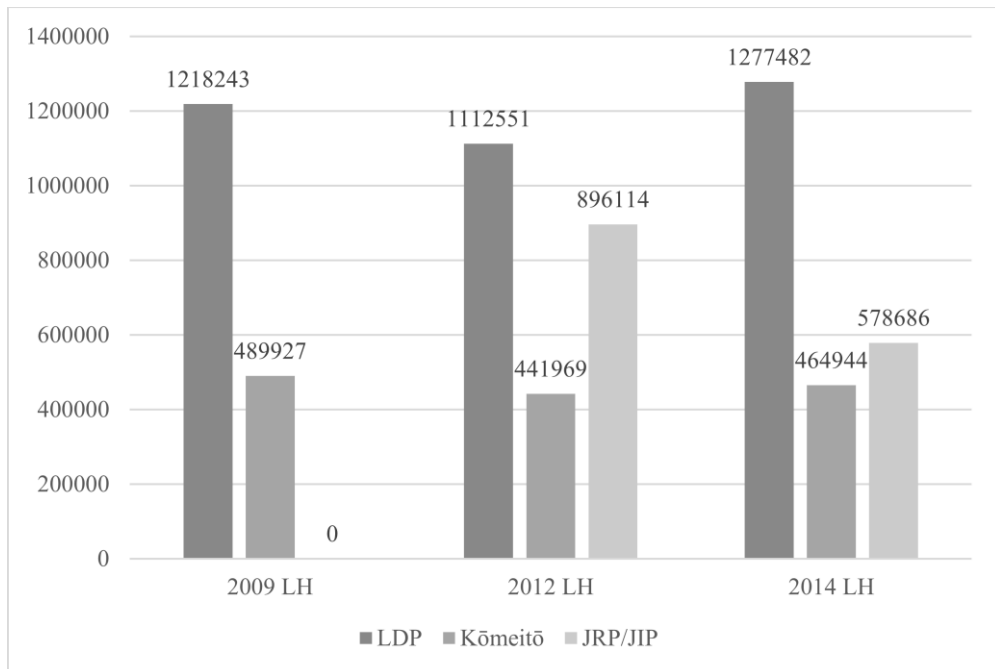


Figure V-2 PR Vote Gains by Party in Tokyo's Special Ward Districts (2009-2014)

affiliations ([Table V-12]). In other words, the JIR candidates' relatively high vote gains in districts compared to the PR vote gains, can be explained as the result of 'personal vote mobilization' rather than the result of JIP's popularity. As the [Figure V-2] shows, the JRP/JIP's vote gains in PR in Tokyo declined sharply between 2012 and 2014 by 35.4%, while the LDP and Kōmeitō increased its 'party votes' despite lower turnout rate.¹⁹²

4) **Regional Segregation of Electoral Strategy**

In order to understand why LDP-Kōmeitō alliance reacted differently toward JRP in the 2012 and 2014 elections differed in the two regions, it is necessary to shed light on two variables that structured the overall strategic choices during the national election: local power balance and perception toward the ORA/JRP. The most obvious factor was the different levels of impacts ORA/JRP brought upon the LDP-Kōmeitō relations at local level. The result of 2011 prefectural assembly election had exposed the overwhelming popularity of the ORA/JRP vis-à-vis the LDP, even proving its capability to overpower the LDP-Kōmeitō electoral alliance. That ORA possessed a simple majority in the Osaka prefectural assembly meant that the LDP-Kōmeitō alliance in Osaka, as it was the case under the DPJ government between 2009 and 2012, became essentially mutilated. Such experience induced the diverging perceptions toward the new party between the LDP and the Kōmeitō; while the Osaka LDP and Hashimoto-led ORA had burned the bridges as the two parties remained hostile toward one another over the issue of Osaka Metropolitan Concept, the Kōmeitō had incentives to mollify conflicts with the ORA in order to avoid direct confrontation during the national election. The saving grace for the Kōmeitō was the power balance within the Osaka and Sakai City Assemblies; because the ORA fell short of holding simple majorities in those city assemblies, Kōmeitō held leverage in the coordination negotiation. In other words, the perceptions toward the ORA at the local level in Osaka were characterized by 'divergence' between LDP and the Kōmeitō. The 'selective' strategy was a method through which Kōmeitō

¹⁹² Turnout rates for PR tier in Tokyo's special ward districts were: 65.68% in 2009, 61.61% in 2012, and 53.76% in 2014.

managed to distribute its electoral resources between LDP and ORA in order to avoid over-supporting one over the other.

In Tokyo, on the other hand, the LDP and Kōmeitō's perception toward ORA/JRP converged, and both parties had incentives to contain the local conflicts over Osaka Metropolitan Concept as 'local issue,' segregating it from national party competition. For the Kōmeitō, the limited impact of the JRP in Tokyo incentivized the party to take on 'regional differentiation' strategy. While in Osaka Kōmeitō returned the favor for the ORA's concessions of four districts by adjusting the levels of cooperation between the LDP and JRP candidates, in Tokyo, Kōmeitō could expect little electoral benefit from the JRP. For the LDP, on the other hand, its central leadership essentially overlooked the local conflicts between LDP and ORA in Osaka and avoided outright confrontation, because of the possible role JRP could play in the national political arenas. Nakano (2016) describes that Suga Yoshihiro, future chief cabinet secretary of the second Abe cabinet and one of closest confidant of Abe Shinzo, had cultivated close relationship with Hashimoto Toru since he first became the governor of Osaka. The Abe-Suga line considered that having Hashimoto and his party on their side would not only contain Kōmeitō in the pursuit of rightist agendas, but also it would allow the LDP to prevent opposition forces from uniting under non-LDP axis (230-232). In other words, the LDP utilized the rise of 'third polar' with rightist inclinations as an opportunity to widen the policy fields and also to strengthen its predominance by dividing up the oppositions.

Even though the two parties had different motivations, the central LDP-Kōmeitō leadership showed compromising attitude vis-à-vis the JRP, marginalizing the local competition in Osaka. In February 2012, Kōmeitō's central leadership launched a project team to discuss the necessary legal measures to realize Osaka Metropolitan Concept, demonstrating its willingness to side with the ORA.¹⁹³ Similarly, despite Osaka LDP *kenren*'s disputes with the ORA, the LDP's central leadership avoided direct confrontation with the JRP—rather, it showed willingness to lend the JRP a helping hand in the passing of Osaka Metropolitan Concept. The LDP and the Kōmeitō had jointly introduced a revision of Local Autonomy Act (*chiho jichihō*) in April 2012, which would

¹⁹³ 公明新聞2012年2月3日 1頁

allow the establishment of special wards (*tokubetsuku*) in regions outside Tokyo.¹⁹⁴ In other words, there were differences in perceptions vis-à-vis ORA/JRP between central and local LDP-Kōmeitō alliances; while the local LDP-Kōmeitō's choice was to 'balance' ORA, the central coalition government sought to 'appease' JRP.

At the same time, the Osaka Kōmeitō's hesitance to bandwagon the ORA and seek the immediate electoral and political benefits cannot be explained without shedding light on the Kōmeitō's electoral concerns in the region-specific context. Simply put, the cultivated mutual dependency between LDP and Kōmeitō in the national elections lured Kōmeitō to take on neutral stance amid hostile rivalry between the LDP and ORA. Kōmeitō fields four single-member district candidates in Osaka, whose elections would be jeopardized if not for the close cooperation with the LDP. Similarly, the LDP's dependency level on the Kōmeitō's robust support base in Osaka has been heightened, especially after the collapse of so-called "LDP system." Not only has the budget cut for local allocation tax and radical reduction of the number of municipal assembly members in the name of decentralization reform drastically undermined local LDP organizations in metropolitan cities such as Osaka, but such center-local rebalancing also impaired *keiretsu* relationship between national and local assembly members, leading to side-switching to locally-embedded political parties among former LDP assembly members (Sunahara 2012: 112-135).

4. Cost of Side-Switching: Kōmeitō in the Post-2014 Elections

While Kōmeitō's regionally-adaptive electoral strategy appeared successful at that moment, it also contained a high political risk. The party's ambiguous positioning at the local level within LDP-ORA conflict derived from Kōmeitō's electoral vulnerability, yet

¹⁹⁴ From the LDP's perspective, the rise of ORA, who was gaining accelerating popularity as the 'third polar' that could absorb non-LDP or non-DPJ votes, was something they needed to appease, rather than driving the wedge between them. Nakano (2016) writes that the Abe-Hashimoto liaison first came into place soon after Hashimoto was first elected Osaka Governor in 2008, and as the JRP advanced into national politics, the Abe leadership began to perceive ORA/JRP not only as the possible partner in pursuing rightist agendas (when Kōmeitō remains unwilling), but also the critical player that could keep opposition forces from uniting under the non-LDP banner (230-231).

it was only a matter of time Kōmeitō was forced to choose a concrete position over the issue of Osaka Metropolitan Concept. Against Hashimoto and ORA's expectation, Osaka Kōmeitō hardened their attitude toward the Hashimoto governance and enhanced cooperation with the local LDP after the 2012 general election, hinting that the Kōmeitō groups in two city assemblies would not cooperate with the ORA in passing the local referendum act. Outraged, Hashimoto intensified the criticism against Kōmeitō, even 'threatening' to run in one of single-member districts against Kōmeitō candidate himself in the upcoming 2014 general election.

Even though Hashimoto and ORA did not field candidates against Kōmeitō in Osaka in 2014, the 'cooperative mood' was nowhere to be found in the 2014 general election between the two parties. And the result showed that it was the Kōmeitō, not the LDP, who had suffered electoral consequences in 2014. [Table V-13] compares the Kōmeitō and LDP's district candidates' vote gains in 2012 and 2014 general election in Osaka. It shows that, unlike the LDP candidates, all four Kōmeitō candidates

Table V-13 LDP/Komeito District Candidates' Vote Gains in SMDs (2012 and 2014 LH)

Turnout (%) in Osaka and Sakai Cities		2012 LH 57.39%		2014 LH 48.43%		Increase (%)
		Vote Count	#Candidate	Vote Count	#Candidate	
Kōmeitō Candidates	Osaka 3	101910	3	84943	2	-16.6%
	Osaka 5	111028	3	92681	2	-16.5%
	Osaka 6	116855	3	94308	3	-19.3%
	Osaka 16	86464	4	66673	4	-22.9%
LDP Candidates	Osaka 1	55039	6	71648	3	30.2%
	Osaka 2	80817	5	78326	3	-3.1%
	Osaka 4	89894	5	82538	4	-8.2%
	Osaka 17	52634	6	63219	3	20.1%

significantly decreased their absolute vote gains between the two elections. Particularly, they lost significant number of votes in Districts 3 and 5 despite the decrease in the number of candidates. The LDP candidates, on the other hand, even though candidates who ran in Districts 2 and 4 slightly earned less votes in 2014 than they did in 2012, in Districts 1 and 17, the candidates seemed to have been able to reincorporate significant portion of votes that were dispersed among opposition candidates in 2012. In other words, it shows that, unlike the LDP, the Kōmeitō does not necessarily benefit from smaller number of candidates in the districts in terms of vote gains.

Such electoral results are also indicative of Kōmeitō's high dependency on non-Kōmeitō voters in mobilizing enough votes to elect its candidates. As the tension grew between the Kōmeitō and ORA after 2012, the ORA/JIP withheld from giving recommendations to Kōmeitō candidates in 2014. It is possible to assume that the absence of cooperation from the JIP supporters—some of them being the former LDP supporters—led to the significant vote losses of the Kōmeitō, exposing its 'floating nature' of electoral support in Osaka. What is significant is that it is the Kōmeitō, not the LDP, who is more susceptible to the emergence of new electoral challenges.

Such 'electoral cost' that accompanied Kōmeitō's region-adaptive electoral strategy was observed, perhaps more vividly, in Tokyo in 2017. Contrary to the circumspect and even discreet approach to the rise of local party in Osaka, the Kōmeitō showed little hesitation in openly supporting the governor-led local party Tokyo Tomin First in the 2017 Tokyo metropolitan assembly election. The close cooperation between the Kōmeitō and Tomin First brought about a historic result. Of 127 seats in the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly, the LDP only won 23, losing 34 of previously held 57 seats [Figure V-3]. Before 2017, the lowest number of seats Tokyo LDP had won in the assembly election was 38 in 2009, and the news media carved the term '*zanpai*' ("devastating defeat") to describe the unprecedented defeat of the ruling LDP. Though it is difficult to ignore the negative impact brought forth by the series of Prime Minister Abe's personal scandals surrounding Moritomo Gakuen and Kake Gakuen to this disastrous defeat, what was significant about this local election was the emergence of the new local party led by Tokyo Governor Koike Yuriko, who became the symbol of anti-

establishment within the Tokyo assembly. Former LDP representative herself, Koike managed to mold out the image of ‘clean slate’ through the handlings of the Toyosu relocation issue and the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

The 2017 Tokyo assembly election was also historic in that the Tokyo Kōmeitō suspended its more than four-decade-long alliance relationship with the LDP and sided with Koike’s new Tomin First Party. The tension between the LDP and the Kōmeitō in Tokyo began as the public discontent grew over two consecutive resignations by Tokyo governors, Inose Naoki (2012-2013) and Masuzoe Yoichi (2014-2016), who were forced to resign after scandals erupted over illegal political donations and misuse of political funds. The public’s anger toward the two governors turned to political parties that endorsed them during elections—LDP and Kōmeitō. Driven by a sense of crisis, the Tokyo Kōmeitō proposed a set of political reform measures that consisted of (1) cutting of assembly members’ salaries by 20%, (2) reduction of political activity expenses and

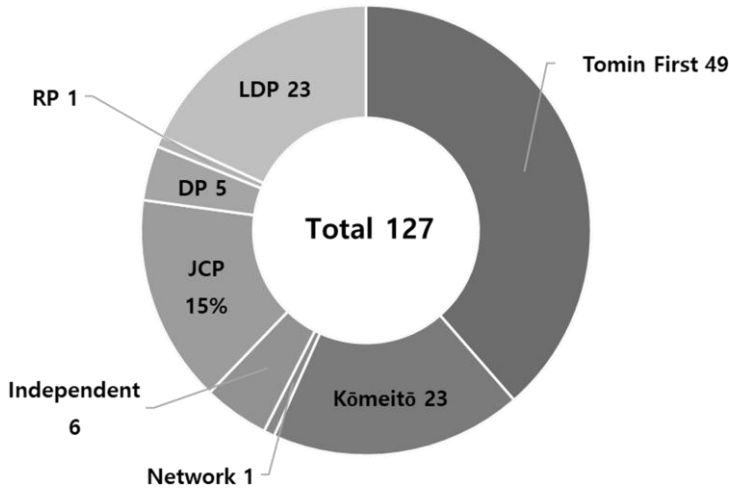


Figure V-3 Result of 2017 Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly Election

the complete online disclosure of balance reports, and (3) abolishing of travel expenses to assembly members.¹⁹⁵ As the LDP shunned off these demands, the Kōmeitō moved quickly to suspend the cooperative ties with the LDP and, by mid-March, had concluded an agreement with newly-elected governor Koike to work with her and her party not only in the assembly but also in the upcoming assembly election. As a result, the Kōmeitō and Tomin First engaged in mutual nomination of candidates, which led to the elections of all twenty-three Kōmeitō candidates and forty-nine Tomin-First candidates, securing the majority in the assembly. The shocking electoral result exposed the serious disintegration of the LDP's support base in Tokyo, and by extension the level of LDP's reliance on Kōmeitō in scraping up enough votes to elect its candidates. The implication of this local election extended to the prospective national election, and whether or not the LDP has enough strength to compete in metropolitan cities on its own.

In other words, the perceptions toward the Tomin First Party completely diverged between the LDP and Kōmeitō over the issues of political reforms within the assembly. The question, then, is why the divergent threat perceptions vis-à-vis local party led to the LDP-Kōmeitō conflicts in Tokyo, unlike the case in Osaka. There are several comparative factors that distinguished electoral environments in Tokyo and Osaka. First, it is necessary to shed light on the timing of Metropolitan Assembly election held in July 2017. In Osaka, the 2011 prefectural assembly election was held under the DPJ government as one of general local elections held nationwide, which blurred the LDP-ORA conflicts at a nationwide scale. In Tokyo, on the other hand, the metropolitan assembly election, held independently from any other local elections, was decorated with clear message that it was a battle between a reformist governor and the 'corrupt' LDP; coupled with PM Abe's personal scandals that erupted in February 2017, the Tokyo metropolitan assembly election received nation-wide attention and highlighted the 'LDP vs. Tomin First' framework.

Second, and more importantly, the LDP's relationship with the governor was quite contrasting between Tokyo and Osaka. Unlike in the gubernatorial election that elected

¹⁹⁵ 『東京公明』 2017春号外

Table V-14 Total vote gains by party in Tokyo metropolitan assembly elections (2013, 2017)

	2013MA (43.50%)	2017 MA (51.28%)	Difference (+/-) (A)	(A)/TOTAL	(2013)- (2017) difference difference (%)
Total Votes	4,532,279,994	5,593,630,996	(-)1,061,351,002	44.31%	
LDP	1,633,303,909	1,260,101,444	-373,202,465	15.58%	-22.85%
DPJ	690,622,746	385,752,149	-304,870,597	12.73%	-44.14%
JRP	374,109	54,016	-320,093	13.36%	-85.56%
Network	94,239	69,929	-24,310	1.01%	-25.80%
Your	311,278	0	-311,278	13.00%	
TOTAL			-2,395,105,064	100.00%	
Kōmeitō	639,160,495	734,697	95,536,505	3.99%	14.95%
JCP	616,721,524	773,722,553	157,001,029	6.56%	25.46%
Independent	118,450	375,048	256,598	10.71%	216.63%
Others	54,395.32	56,335	1,939.68	0.08%	3.57%
Tomin First	0	1,884,029.85	1,884,029.85	78.66%	
TOTAL			2,395,105,064	100.00%	

Hashimoto Toru to the governor of Osaka in 2008, the Tokyo gubernatorial election held in July 2016 was characterized as unequivocal contest between the LDP versus non-LDP candidates. The LDP and Kōmeitō jointly endorsed Masuda Hiroya, who had served as the governor of Iwate Prefecture for three terms between 1995 and 2007. After the LDP Tokyo *kenren* refused to recommend Koike Yuriko, she intensified criticism against the party's local branch, successfully engraving the image of herself as 'anti-establishment' to the voters. That Koike won the election by earning 44.5% vote share, and Masuda's vote share only reached 27.4%, was enough trigger for the Kōmeitō to shift its perception toward the newly elected governor, particularly considering how close Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly election was scheduled to Koike's triumph.

Kōmeitō's side-switching that followed Koike's decisive victory at the gubernatorial election and her growing popularity over the handlings of controversial Toyosu relocation project and the 2020 Tokyo Olympics worked favorably for the Tokyo Kōmeitō. In the metropolitan assembly election, Tomin First Party collected 1,884,030 votes, earning 33.7% of vote share. In order to show where these votes came from, [Table V-14] compares the vote gains of major political parties in the 2013 and 2017 metropolitan assembly elections. The upper-section shows the vote gains of political parties that earned less number of votes in 2017 than in 2013, while the lower-section shows the vote gains of Kōmeitō, JCP, Independent, etc., who increased their vote gains between the two elections. As the table shows, most conservative parties lost significant number of votes; the party that suffered the electoral loss was JRP, whose vote gains declined by 86%. LDP's absolute vote gains also declined by 23%, and the DPJ lost about half of previously earned votes. On the other hand, Kōmeitō and Japan Communist Party managed to increase their vote shares, by earning 15% and 25% more votes, respectively. Put differently, including the 'floating voters,' about 2.4 million votes which were either not casted in the previous elections or casted for the conservative parties were relocated and divided among Tomin First, Kōmeitō, JCP, and independent candidates. Tomin First candidates earned 78.66% of those votes. In other words, those who supported Koike Yuriko and her new party consisted of 'floating voters' and the conservative voters who had previously voted for LDP, DPJ, JRP, or Your Party.

In terms of Kōmeitō's vote gains, while in Osaka, the rise of ORA led to the decrease of vote shares for both LDP and Kōmeitō between 2007 and 2011,¹⁹⁶ in Tokyo, Kōmeitō succeeded in expanding its share. In other words, Kōmeitō's outright side-switching brought in some of the 'non-LDP votes,' and succeeded in segregating the national and local party images. Perhaps what was even more striking about the Kōmeitō's behaviors was its swift side-switching back to the LDP-Kōmeitō framework at the national level in the 2017 general election held in October 2017. In September 2017, as the talks of general election surfaced, Koike Yuriko expressed her desire to establish a national counterpart to Tomin First Party. Named Party of Hope (*kibouno tou*), fourteen Diet members, mostly defectors from The Democratic Party (*minshin tou*, DP), joined her cause.¹⁹⁷ Maehara Seiji, then the president of DP, made inquiries to the governor of Tokyo about dissolving the party and joining the Party of Hope, in order to prevent opposition fragmentation from paving the ground for another landslide victory of the LDP-Kōmeitō alliance. Koike, who was running out of time in recruiting prospective candidates yet did not wish to be taken over by the DP, stated to the press on September 29 that prospective DP representatives who wish to join the Party of Hope would be evaluated individually, and those who do not share the basic views on security policy or constitutional reform would be "crossed off" (*haijo*) from the list of party membership.¹⁹⁸ To this, liberal conservatives within the DP who showed strong aversion against the idea of joining the Koike-Maehara alliance, defected and formed a new party, Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan (CDPJ, *ikkenminshu tou*), with Edano Yukio as the party president. As a result, opposition fragmentation was not fully mitigated even though JRP withdrew from all Tokyo districts, particularly in Tokyo where PH fielded fifteen candidates and CDPJ fielded eleven in seventeen special ward districts. As feared by the non-LDP forces, the LDP-Kōmeitō alliance secured fourteen seats in seventeen districts in Tokyo, while CDPJ scraped three and PH lost in all districts.

¹⁹⁶ Refer to [Table V-5] for the vote gains and shares in the 2007 and 2011 Osaka Prefectural Assembly elections.

¹⁹⁷ Associated Press, September 27, 2017. Of fourteen participating Diet members, twelve were Lower House representatives and two were Upper House members.

¹⁹⁸ 朝日新聞デジタル 2017年9月29日
<https://digital.asahi.com/articles/ASK9Y572FK9YUTIL02P.html>

Table V-16 LDP/Komeito Candidates' Vote Gains in 2017 General Election and Consolidation Rate (CR) in Tokyo

	SMD	PR		ESTIMATED TOTAL	CR
		LDP	Kōmeitō		
TOKYO 1	93234.92	84649	18436	103085	90.4%
TOKYO 2	112993	87177	14808	101985	110.8%
TOYKO 3	107708	82643	23183	105826	101.8%
TOKYO 4	115239	72216	31369	103585	111.3%
TOKYO 5	101314	79994	17524	97518	103.9%
TOKYO 6	98422	75543	18480	94023	104.7%
TOKYO 7	85305	76737	18148	94885	89.9%
TOKYO 8	99863	76828	18297	95125	105.0%
TOKYO 9	122279	73779	27819	101598	120.4%
TOKYO 10	91146.92	72402	23295	95697	95.2%
TOKYO 11	104612	69223	28887	98110	106.6%
TOKYO 12	112597	68506	34670	103176	109.1%
TOKYO 13	120744	66815	33728	100543	120.1%
TOKYO 14	104137	70794	29036	99830	104.3%
TOKYO 15	101155	73688	25923	99611	101.6%
TOKYO 16	84457	65648	34482	100130	84.3%
TOKYO 17	127632	73498	31963	105461	121.0%
TOTAL	1782839	1270140	430048	1700188	104.9%

Table V-17 Comparison of PR Vote Gains by Party (2014 & 2017 Lower House)

	2014 PR	2017 PR	VOTE INCREASE
LDP	1277482	1264976	-12506
KŌMEITŌ	464944	428309	-36635
DPJ	588646	0	-588646
CDPJ	0	929761	929761
POH	0	701259	701259
PLP	112055	0	-112055
JRP	578686	144245	-434441
PFG	179122	0	-179122
NRP	11836	0	-11836
KOKORO	0	28737	28737
HRP	12214	11264	-950
SDP	84860	35464	-49396
JCP	596652	418219	-178433
NO PARTY TO SUPPORT	0	87800	87800
TOTAL	3906497	4050034	143537

Above anything else, the victory of LDP-Kōmeitō alliance in Tokyo owed to the high coherence of the LDP-Kōmeitō alliance in seventeen districts. [Table V-16] shows the vote gains by LDP/Kōmeitō candidates in Tokyo's seventeen single-member districts, along with the 'party votes' earned in respective districts. As the result indicates, the LDP and Kōmeitō's total consolidation rate reached above 100%, elucidating the continuously successful conflation of two support bases in Tokyo. Put from another perspective, the Kōmeitō supporters continued to support the LDP candidates in single-member districts in the national election. The candidates who recorded relatively lower consolidation rate, such as Tokyo Districts 1, and 7, faced potent CDPJ candidates like Kaieda Banri and Nagatsuma Akira.

While the Kōmeitō may have succeeded in appeasing LDP in the 2017 election in Tokyo by successfully mobilizing its support base for election of fourteen candidates in the metropolitan districts, the cost of abrupt side-switching as well as its indecisive positionings between local and national elections came with a cost. As the [] shows, the Kōmeitō's vote losses in proportional representation in Tokyo's metropolitan districts was much severe than the LDP's; while LDP's absolute vote gains only decreased by 1%, Kōmeitō's 'party votes' declined by 7.9% between the 2014 and 2017 general elections, hitting the lowest number since the launching of the two-party alliance. Instead, the newly established CDPJ and Party of Hope earned a significant number of votes, gaining 23.0% and 13.7% of vote shares, respectively, while the rest of the existing parties (except for Kokoro and No Party to Support), decreased its vote gains. The electoral result indicates that the LDP is able to cultivate relatively the same scale of party votes, yet the Kōmeitō's PR vote gains suggest that the party is suffering from the declining of support base in Tokyo. In the past, the Kōmeitō had managed to mobilize about at least 490,000 PR votes in Tokyo's metropolitan districts; in the 2000 general election, when the party received virtually no support from the LDP counterpart, the Kōmeitō collected 496,926 votes, and in 2009, even when the coalition partners had one of the most difficult electoral situations against the DPJ, the Kōmeitō's managed to scrape up 492,199 party votes in Tokyo's metropolitan districts. That the Kōmeitō's vote gains in PR in the 2017 general election fell largely short of the 'bottom line' seems to suggest

that the coherence of Kōmeitō supporters in Tokyo is on verge of erosion at the very least, possibly outflowing to newly emerging political parties.

At the same time, the above result indicates that the rise of local parties, as well as the emergence of new political players, affect the coalition partners in different ways, elucidating once again the ‘disengaged’ nature of the LDP-Kōmeitō alliance in Tokyo. The LDP demonstrated its capability to maintain its party strength in the national elections, yet the Kōmeitō seems to have paid the price for the inconsistency of their positions. In other words, it is the Kōmeitō, not the LDP, who paid for the political drama surrounding the rise of local party in Tokyo.

5. Explaining the Regional Diversity: Dependency Level and Threat Perception

Even though Kōmeitō seems to take on contradictory behaviors at times in regard to the rise of new actors in local politics, it is not mere caprice or myopic calculations that drive their operational logics; rather, their strategic choices are embedded in the institutional structures, shaped not only by the local and national electoral systems but also by the accumulated resources of interactions with other political actors. What is critical is not necessarily the party’s tendency to switch sides from time to time; it is their ability to change partners *successfully* in order to minimize electoral risks, by drawing regional borders and segregating national and local politics. The rise of local parties is not an isolated phenomenon that can only be found in Tokyo and Osaka, and the center-local cleavages salient in metropolitan regions such as Nagoya, could bring another wave of powerful local parties. And as the cases presented in this chapter showed, the Kōmeitō’s choices could determine the political direction of the local governance altogether.

From the cases analyzed in this chapter, it is possible to draw a diagram to explain the LDP-Kōmeitō cooperation mechanism in relations to the rise of ‘third party’ ([Figure V-4]). First, one of the critical factor that determines the two-party relationship at the local level is the power balance between the two parties both in terms of party strength in the assembly and the scales of supporters, which affects the levels of dependency toward

		Perception toward Third Party	
		Divergence	Convergence
LDP-Kōmeitō Dependency Level	High	Selective Cooperation	Mutual Dependence
	Low	Conflict	Disengaged Cooperation

Figure V-4 LDP-Kōmeitō Cooperation Mechanism

one another. In Osaka, the dependency level was relatively high, not only because of the small-sized district system adopted during local elections, but also because of a significant number of Kōmeitō candidates running in Osaka districts during national elections. In Tokyo, on the other hand, the level of dependency between the LDP and the Kōmeitō is relatively low, because the local electoral system allows political parties to operate under autonomous strategic environment in the elections of candidates. Moreover, the fact that the LDP possesses much larger scale of supporters in Tokyo has molded lower dependency level on the Kōmeitō.

Second, in relations to the rise of local parties, and how it affects LDP-Kōmeitō relations at both local and national levels, it is necessary to shed light on the two parties' perceptions toward the new challenges. In other words, whether LDP and the Kōmeitō develop the same preference and shape joint strategic depends on whether or not the two parties' perception toward the 'third player' converges or diverges. In Osaka, both LDP and Kōmeitō equally acknowledged the threat of Osaka Restoration Association after the 2011 prefectural assembly election. Yet, while the ORA-LDP confrontation was irreversible amid fierce conflicts between Governor Hashimoto and local LDP *kenren*, the prospects of upcoming general election, as well as the ORA's 'credible threat'

strategy that insinuated possibility of fielding its own candidates against the Kōmeitō's in Osaka's four districts, eventually divided the LDP and Kōmeitō's perceptions toward ORA. As a result, the Kōmeitō avoided outright confrontation with the ORA, shifting LDP-Kōmeitō alliance in Osaka from the one characterized by 'mutual dependency' to 'selective cooperation.' In Tokyo, on the other hand, the low dependency level as well as the converging perception vis-à-vis JRP/JIP induced continuous 'disengaged cooperation' in the 2012 and 2014 general elections. However, as the LDP and Kōmeitō developed diverging perceptions toward Koike Yuriko's Tomin First Party, the two parties' complaisant relations turned extremely hostile. As it was also the case in Osaka, the LDP and Kōmeitō tried to keep pace with one another, endorsing Masuda Hiroya as joint candidate against Koike Yuriko for the 2016 gubernatorial election. Yet the landslide victory of Koike against LDP/Kōmeitō-endorsed candidate, as well as the unceasing scandals surrounding Prime Minister Abe and Tokyo LDP *kenren*, eventually reshaped Kōmeitō's strategy for the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly election in 2017. It turned out it did not take much for the complaisant two-party relationship in Tokyo to turn into all-out conflicts within a matter of few months.

The most notable aspect of the Kōmeitō's electoral strategy that appeared in the cases of Tokyo and Osaka is its ability to segregate regional as well as national-local electoral strategies. That the Kōmeitō's local party organization can send a small signal through variety of means, such as recommendation system, to direct and even micro-manage the voting decisions for its supporters is by all means the strongest suit which has allowed this small party to survive through various electoral as well as political challenges, not to mention to maintain balance against its coalition partner. At the same time, however, such ambivalence of policy positions and frequent side-switching between local and national political market seems to be costing the coherence of the party's iron support base. The outflow of conservative votes to newly formed parties under the opposition fragmentation is now an unmistakable trend, which can altogether undermine the party's survival strategy that depends upon the supporters' loyalty.

From the LDP's perspective, on the other hand, Kōmeitō's abrupt side-switching in Tokyo's local politics was a wake-up call. That Kōmeitō can sever the relationship of

more than four decades in the metropolitan assembly so easily meant that the same thing could happen in the national elections as well. While LDP's electoral dominance after 2012 appears stable, it relies heavily not only on the opposition fragmentations but also on the tenacious support base of the Kōmeitō in urban districts—which remains to be one of few 'organized' electoral resources LDP candidates depend upon. Given the recent behaviors of the coalition partner, however, it is only natural for the LDP to develop a sense of urgency in cultivating another source of electoral resources. While the LDP-Kōmeitō alliance appears strong at least at the national level, the 'flexibility,' one of the critical pillars of two-party alliance, seems to have become a double-edged sword that can also throw the partnership off balance.

The rise of local parties imposed different impacts upon the LDP and Kōmeitō, as the two parties attempted to deal with the new phenomenon in various forms. On the one hand, the LDP's central leadership saw the emergence of rightist party as an opportunity to widen the policy field, and by marginalizing local LDP-ORA conflicts in Osaka, it saw an opportunity to pursue rightist agendas at the national level, with which Kōmeitō would not easily get on board. The Kōmeitō, on the other hand, took on a more defensive strategy by engaging in an implicit distribution of electoral resources and regionally segregating the electoral strategies.

Put from another perspective, the rise of local parties and their advancement into national party competition became a turning point for the LDP-Kōmeitō alliance in that the end of 'two-party competition' after the fall of DPJ government invited the reinstitution of multi-party competition, within which the Kōmeitō became no longer the only option for the LDP's search for coalition partners. In addition, the fact that these local parties were colored by rightist proclivity further complicated the Kōmeitō's calculation. Simply put, Kōmeitō's 'centrist' stance became increasingly challenged as the Abe leadership strove for 'discomforting' national agendas, such as interpretational revision of constitution and the legalization of the right of collective self-defense in 2015. In a way, the Kōmeitō's region-specific, what is seemingly 'extemporaneous' strategies surrounding the emergence of new political parties, highlight the party's bewildered state in dealing with the trend for 'rightward tilt.'

VI. CONCLUSION: LIMITS OF ELECTORAL CARTEL AND THE PERILOUS ADVENTURE

The LDP-Kōmeitō ‘electoral cartel,’ established after the collapse of ‘LDP system’ in 1993, was a part of grand efforts to rediscover LDP’s lost dominance. Over the next two decades, the alliance with the Kōmeitō became one of the critical pillars upon which the LDP managed to ‘reconstruct’ its system of dominance through electoral supremacy. Particularly, the incorporation of the Kōmeitō support base at district levels became the foundation in overcoming the ‘new urban challenges’ imposed by the electoral system reform. On the other hand, Kōmeitō successfully installed the flexible mechanism of resource allocation in order to minimize the risks of cooperating with the LDP and protect its organizational integrity. Kōmeitō’s precise allocation of electoral resources and successful operation of risk-minimization mechanism has allowed the sustainable management of the inter-party relations between the two ‘strange bedfellows’ during the years of political instability. This study attempted to shed light on the generally overlooked question of why and how the LDP-Kōmeitō alliance has sustained over the last two decades by looking at temporal and regional variations of electoral cooperation that embody the ‘flexibility’ and ‘adaptability’ of the two-party electoral alliance.

The period of domination by LDP-Kōmeitō electoral alliance was also a grand political experiment. From 1999 to particularly 2009, the LDP-Kōmeitō coalition represented the alliance between conservatives within the LDP and the centrist Kōmeitō—a strategic shift from the liberal-progressive alliance between 1993 and 1999. After the fall from power in 1993, the LDP sought possibility for establishing a ruling coalition with the leftist parties, including JSP, in desperate need to regain ruling power. Such strategic design for survival was drawn by the liberal conservatives within the LDP initiated by Kato-Nonaka alliance. Put from another perspective, the alliance with the socialists can be interpreted as the last phase of LDP’s liberalist turn, just before the dawn of alliance with the Kōmeitō. LDP’s turn away from the alliance with the socialists to the alliance with the Kōmeitō symbolized its strategic shift toward centrist-conservative alliance, sugarcoated with the promise of electoral cooperation under the newly adopted electoral system.

Yet the centrist-conservative inter-party alliance in the form of LDP-Kōmeitō alliance has encountered a challenge in recent years. The ‘limitation’ of the electoral cartel, which has empowered the LDP beyond its true strength and popularity, became first apparent in 2009, when the highest degrees of cooperation turned out to be insufficient in thwarting non-LDP/Kōmeitō conservative voters, who chose to support the counter-axis of LDP-Kōmeitō government. The shocking result of the 2009 general election exposed the bare ‘maximal value’ of the combined electoral resources, and to the LDP and Kōmeitō’s fear, the prospects for expansion was extremely grim. The Kōmeitō’s capability of vote mobilization which has been slowly yet steadily shrinking was the ultimate sign of ‘limitation’ embedded within the ‘electoral cartel.’ As discussed in Chapter IV, in both national and local elections, it is possible to observe the declining capability of Kōmeitō’s vote mobilization in urban regions starting from the late 2000s. Further, such trend is commonly found nationally as well [Figure VI-1].

Such realization of the ‘limitation’ was what drove the wedge between the two coalition partners in the post-2009 period. After the LDP returned to power in 2012 under prime minister Abe’s leadership, the LDP-Kōmeitō electoral cartel appears to be undergoing significant alteration amid changing political landscapes on both national and local levels. At the local level, the rise of governor-led local parties in metropolitan regions, such as Tokyo, Osaka, and Nagoya, has generated diverging perceptions between the LDP and the Kōmeitō vis-à-vis the local party. As the case studies in Chapter V showed, that the two parties do not always develop the same preference over the new challenges exhibits the ever-present possibility for inter-party conflicts that may unbalance the accumulated cooperative framework between the LDP and Kōmeitō.

Furthermore, along with the expanding trend of local realignments induced by the governor-led local parties, their advancements into national politics, along with the births of rightist splinter parties, may be a bigger threat for the future of LDP-Kōmeitō alliance, not because of the popularity or momentum they can lead, but because of the expansion of policy fields they have brought up to the party competition at the national level. From Osaka Restoration Association to Tomin First Party, as well as other so-called ‘satellite

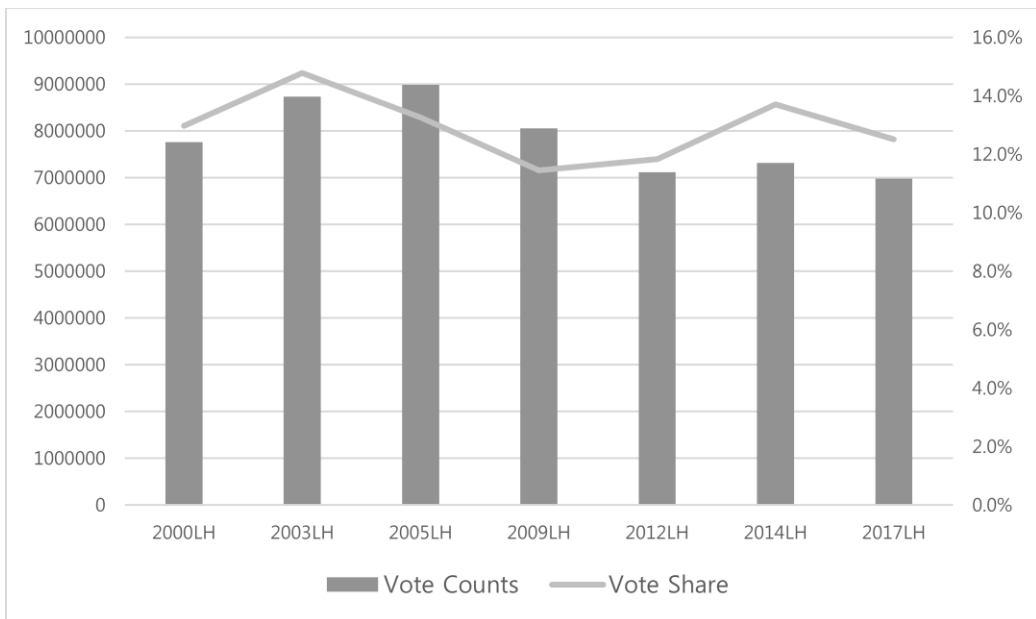


Figure VI-1 Komeito's Vote Counts in PR in LH Elections (2000-2017)

parties' that entered national politics after 2012, such as Japan Restoration Party and Your Party (later reorganized into one party) equally shared hardline conservative agendas, becoming Abe-led LDP's potential confidant in the Diet (Nakano 2015: 151-152). Coupled with prolonged dominance of hardliners within the LDP, the policy distance between the two coalition partners have continued to widen, and the Kōmeitō is increasingly facing the dilemma between the choices of maintaining its policy integrity and staying in the ruling power with the LDP.

In a way, the 'perilousness' of the two-party electoral alliance, and by extension the LDP-Kōmeitō coalition government, is caused by the mismatches of ideological and policy inclinations between the Kōmeitō and LDP's latent partners, who can provide helping hand to the LDP in pursuing controversial, rightist agendas. What is even more disconcerting, at least from the Kōmeitō's perspective, is that the LDP's rightward tilt, or what appears to be flirtation with rightist parties in the post-2012 period, may not be just about Prime Minister Abe's attempt to satisfy his personal penchant; instead, it can be understood as a rational strategy to supplement additional source of votes other than the Kōmeitō's. During the period of DPJ administration, the LDP leadership contemplated on the prospects of cultivating yet another source of 'organized votes,' centering around rightist civil groups, who could not be incorporated into DPJ's voting machines.

Yet whether or not such changing political and electoral environments and the widening policy distance between the LDP and Kōmeitō would simply lead to the total demise of the LDP-Kōmeitō alliance is another question. As this study has attempted to demonstrate, the formative process of the electoral alliance did not take a predefined path, nor did it take place equally across time and place. The most significant aspect of the two-party alliance derives from flexibility and adaptability to time- or region-specific challenges, and it is unlikely that the LDP and Kōmeitō would abandon the established cooperative framework so easily, for a few pragmatic reasons. First, despite growing assessment that Japan is now undergoing rightward tilt and there has been a significant expansion of rightward-oriented voters who favor rightwing parties, nowhere do we find the political organization that possesses comparable degree of organizational coherence or scales of support bases as the Kōmeitō's. For any political parties, highly accurate

information on seven million voters nationwide, from their areas of residency to social networks, is a rare electoral asset that cannot easily be replaced or cultivated. And it is highly questionable whether the new parties, or the LDP for that matter, would be able to accumulate the scale supporters or electoral resources that come anything close to the Kōmeitō's.

Second, from the LDP's perspective, the Kōmeitō's electoral assets cannot easily be relinquished, not only because of its scale but also because of where it exists—in the urban regions. Even though the LDP appears to be claiming overwhelming number of seats in the urban districts over the past few national elections, its victories in the urban districts are the product of opposition failure and pre-electoral coordination with the Kōmeitō. As the advancement of CDPJ or the JCP's electoral results in the urban districts occasionally indicate, there are significant scale of non-LDP voters that can potentially outnumber the electoral alliance. Further, the rise of local parties, as game-changing as it is, it is a phenomenon found in highly metropolitan regions in Japan. And as the success of new type of local governors, such as Hashimoto Toru and Koike Yuriko, rests upon their policy directions that challenge the existing national political parties—the LDP government—, it would be politically risky for the local parties to demonstrate compromising attitude toward the LDP, despite similar policy inclinations. In other words, for the LDP, the rise of local parties does not necessarily diminish the incentives to continuously cooperate closely with the Kōmeitō. For the Kōmeitō, on the other hand, the collusion between local party and the LDP could potentially undermine its position as the holder of 'casting vote' in local and national political market—a risk they must fend off through electoral strategies. And it was precisely what the party managed to demonstrate before the LDP in the 2017 Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly election—how their choice of cooperation partner can harm the LDP's electoral interests.

At the same time, it is necessary to shed light on three potential challenges that could attenuate the LDP-Kōmeitō alliance in the future. First and foremost, the widening policy distance between the two parties can no longer go overlooked. As the rule by hardliners preservers and possibility for cooperation with newly rising political parties expands, the Kōmeitō seems no longer able to appease its supporters by weighing the

cost and benefits of staying in the ruling power. Second, perhaps in relations to this point, it is possible to spot the slow declining of the number of Kōmeitō's 'party votes' during the national election after 2012. While the Kōmeitō increased the vote gains between 2000 and 2005, and even mobilized eight million votes in the 2009 election, the party barely secured seven million votes in the 2012 election. While it is not possible to precisely pinpoint where the Kōmeitō's 'million votes' disappeared to, the growing number of small-sized parties after 2012, as well as the LDP supporter's crossover to them, seems to have invited the defection of Kōmeitō's party votes to the LDP's potential partners in the Diet.

Yet perhaps the most likely challenge against the LDP-Kōmeitō alliance in the future is the possibility for opposition unity among the liberal conservative camps. After the collapse of DPJ, there has not been a potent attempt for the reorganization of 'alternative axis' against the LDP. Yet the absence of competitive political party does not mean the absence of liberal conservative voters altogether. In fact, the results of urban competitions in the recent elections suggest the existence of a significant number of non-LDP liberal-conservative voters, who favored CDPJ-JCP framework over the LDP-Kōmeitō alliance. For the LDP-Kōmeitō alliance, the biggest threat may derive from overinvestment on the rightist agendas, overlooking the importance of incorporating the liberal conservatives.

The LDP-Kōmeitō alliance, as it always has been, is likely to be characterized by flexibility, accompanied by growing precariousness. If there is one thing certain about what becomes of the two-party alliance in the future is that it may not be as comprehensive or coherent as it has been, as the two parties attempt to adapt to the changing internal as well as external political-electoral environments in different ways.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 District Magnitude (M) and Number of (Elected) Candidates in Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly Elections

Ward	2001 PA			2005 PA			2009 PA			2013 PA			2017 PA		
	M	LDP	Kōmei tō	M	LDP	Kōmei tō	M	LDP	Kōmei tō	M	LDP	Kōmei tō	M	LDP	Kōmei tō
Chiyoda	1	1 (1)	0	1	1 (1)	0	1	1 (0)	0	1	1 (1)	0	1	1 (0)	0
Chuo	1	1 (1)	0	1	1 (1)	0	1	1 (0)	0	1	1 (1)	0	1	1 (0)	0
Minato	2	1 (1)	0	2	1 (1)	0	2	1 (1)	0	2	2 (2)	0	2	2 (1)	0
Shinjuku	4	1 (1)	1 (1)	4	1 (1)	1 (1)	4	2 (1)	1 (1)	4	2 (2)	1 (1)	4	2 (1)	1 (1)
Bunkyo	2	1 (1)	0	2	1 (0)	0	2	1 (1)	0	2	1 (1)	0	2	1 (1)	0
Taito	2	1 (1)	0	2	1 (1)	0	2	1 (1)	0	2	1 (1)	0	2	1 (0)	0
Sumida	3	2 (2)	1 (1)	3	2 (1)	1 (1)	3	1 (1)	1 (1)	3	2 (2)	1 (1)	3	2 (1)	1 (1)
Koto	4	1 (1)	1 (1)	4	1 (1)	1 (1)	4	2 (1)	1 (1)	4	1 (1)	1 (1)	4	2 (1)	1 (1)
Shinagawa	4	1 (1)	1 (1)	4	2 (2)	1 (1)	4	2 (1)	1 (1)	4	2 (2)	1 (1)	4	2 (0)	1 (1)
Meguro	3	1 (1)	1 (1)	3	1 (1)	1 (1)	3	1 (1)	1 (1)	3	2 (2)	1 (1)	3	2 (0)	1 (1)
Ota	8	3 (3)	2 (2)	8	3 (3)	2 (2)	8	3 (3)	2 (2)	8	3 (3)	2 (2)	8	3 (2)	2 (2)
Setagaya	8	3 (3)	2 (2)	8	3 (2)	2 (2)	8	3 (1)	2 (2)	8	3 (3)	2 (2)	8	3 (3)	1 (1)
Shibuya	2	1 (1)	0	2	1 (1)	0	2	1 (1)	0	2	1 (1)	0	2	1 (0)	0
Nakano	4	2 (2)	1 (1)	4	2 (1)	1 (1)	4	2 (1)	1 (1)	4	1 (1)	1 (1)	3	1 (0)	1 (1)
Suginami	6	2 (2)	1 (1)	6	2 (1)	1 (1)	6	2 (1)	1 (1)	6	2 (2)	1 (1)	6	2 (2)	1 (1)
Toshima	3	1 (1)	1 (1)	3	1 (1)	1 (1)	3	1 (1)	1 (1)	3	1 (1)	1 (1)	3	1 (0)	1 (1)
Kita	4	1 (1)	1 (1)	4	1 (1)	1 (1)	4	1 (1)	1 (1)	4	1 (1)	1 (1)	3	1 (0)	1 (1)
Arakawa	2	1 (1)	1 (1)	2	1 (1)	1 (1)	2	1 (0)	1 (1)	2	1 (1)	1 (1)	2	1 (0)	1 (1)
Itabashi	5	2 (2)	1 (1)	5	2 (1)	1 (1)	5	2 (1)	1 (1)	5	2 (2)	1 (1)	5	2 (0)	1 (1)
Nerima	6	2 (2)	1 (1)	6	2 (2)	1 (1)	6	2 (2)	1 (1)	6	2 (2)	1 (1)	6	2 (1)	1 (1)
Adachi	6	3 (3)	2 (2)	6	3 (2)	2 (2)	6	2 (1)	2 (2)	6	2 (2)	2 (2)	6	2 (1)	2 (2)
Katsushika	4	2 (2)	1 (1)	4	2 (2)	1 (1)	4	2 (1)	1 (1)	4	2 (2)	1 (1)	4	2 (1)	1 (1)
Edogawa	5	2 (2)	1 (1)	5	2 (1)	1 (1)	5	2 (2)	1 (1)	5	2 (2)	1 (1)	5	2 (1)	1 (1)
Total	89	36 (36)	20 (20)	89	37 (29)	20 (20)	89	37 (24)	20 (20)	89	38 (38)	20 (20)	87	39 (16)	19 (19)
Entire Tokyo	127	55 (53)	23 (23)	127	57 (48)	23 (23)	127	58 (38)	23 (23)	127	59 (59)	23 (23)	127	60 (23)	23 (23)

Appendix 2 District Magnitude (M) and Number of (Elected) Candidates in Tokyo 23 Special Ward Assembly Elections

Ward	1999 WA			2003 WA			2007 WA			2011 WA			2015 WA		
	M	LDP	Komeito	M	LDP	Komeito	M	LDP	Komeito	M	LDP	Komeito	M	LDP	Komeito
Chiyoda	25	16 (12)	2 (2)	25	15 (12)	2 (2)	25	14 (11)	2 (2)	25	13 (10)	2 (2)	25	11 (10)	2 (2)
Chuo	30	12 (11)	5 (5)	30	15 (13)	5 (5)	30	14 (14)	5 (5)	30	14 (12)	5 (5)	30	13 (12)	4 (4)
Minato	35	15 (14)	5 (5)	34	14 (11)	6 (6)	34	16 (13)	6 (6)	34	14 (11)	6 (6)	34	14 (13)	6 (6)
Shinjuku	44	18 (13)	9 (9)	38	12 (8)	9 (9)	38	12 (10)	9 (9)	38	10 (9)	9 (9)	38	13 (10)	9 (9)
Bunkyo	38	6 (6)	5 (5)	34	6 (5)	6 (6)	34	11 (9)	6 (6)	34	11 (8)	5 (5)	34	10 (9)	5 (5)
Taito	34	14 (11)	5 (5)	34	14 (13)	5 (5)	32	14 (11)	5 (5)	32	9 (8)	5 (5)	32	12 (10)	5 (5)
Sumida	36	19 (17)	7 (7)	34	18 (16)	7 (7)	32	18 (14)	7 (7)	32	15 (13)	7 (7)	32	16 (13)	7 (7)
Koto	44	17 (14)	11 (11)	44	14 (13)	11 (11)	44	16 (11)	11 (11)	44	13 (12)	10 (10)	44	14 (13)	10 (9)
Shinagawa	42	15 (13)	8 (8)	42	14 (13)	8 (8)	40	14 (11)	8 (8)	40	13 (11)	8 (8)	40	15 (11)	8 (8)
Meguro	36	16 (12)	6 (6)	36	15 (11)	6 (6)	36	16 (15)	3 (3)	36	15 (14)	6 (6)	36	17 (13)	6 (6)
Ota	50	22 (18)	12 (12)	50	20 (19)	12 (12)	50	19 (18)	12 (12)	50	17 (16)	12 (12)	50	18 (16)	12 (12)
Setagaya	55	19 (19)	11 (11)	52	22 (15)	11 (11)	52	23 (12)	11 (11)	50	18 (15)	10 (10)	50	18 (16)	10 (10)
Shibuya	38	13 (12)	6 (6)	34	14 (10)	6 (6)	34	10 (10)	6 (6)	34	11 (7)	6 (6)	34	13 (10)	6 (6)
Nakano	44	14 (13)	9 (9)	42	18 (14)	9 (9)	42	15 (14)	9 (9)	42	15 (14)	9 (9)	42	16 (13)	9 (9)
Suginami	52	13 (11)	8 (8)	48	12 (12)	8 (8)	48	16 (14)	8 (8)	48	17 (14)	8 (8)	48	15 (13)	8 (8)
Toshima	40	16 (14)	8 (8)	38	18 (12)	8 (8)	36	18 (10)	8 (8)	36	12 (10)	8 (8)	36	13 (13)	8 (8)
Kita	46	15 (13)	10 (10)	44	16 (13)	10 (10)	44	13 (11)	10 (10)	44	16 (14)	10 (10)	40	14 (13)	10 (10)
Arakawa	34	14 (13)	6 (6)	32	13 (12)	6 (6)	32	16 (13)	6 (6)	32	14 (13)	6 (6)	32	13 (13)	6 (6)
Itabashi	50	17 (17)	11 (11)	50	19 (15)	12 (12)	46	16 (13)	12 (12)	46	18 (15)	12 (12)	46	17 (15)	12 (11)
Nerima	50	17 (14)	11 (11)	50	17 (15)	12 (12)	50	19 (15)	12 (12)	50	17 (17)	12 (12)	50	20 (18)	12 (12)
Adachi	56	29 (24)	16 (16)	50	22 (21)	14 (14)	50	23 (21)	14 (14)	45	17 (17)	14 (14)	45	18 (17)	14 (13)
Katsushika	46	18 (14)	11 (11)	46	20 (19)	11 (11)	40	17 (15)	11 (11)	40	15 (12)	11 (11)	40	14 (12)	11 (11)
Edogawa	48	18 (16)	13 (13)	46	19 (15)	13 (13)	44	22 (16)	13 (13)	44	18 (16)	13 (13)	44	18 (13)	13 (13)
Total	973	373 (321)	195 (195)	933	367 (307)	197 (197)	913	372 (301)	194 (194)	906	332 (288)	194 (194)	902	342 (296)	193 (190)

Appendix 3 District Magnitude (M) and Number of (Elected) Candidates in Osaka Prefectural Assembly Elections (Osaka & Sakai Cities)

	1999 PA			2003 PA			2007 PA			2011 PA			2015 PA		
	M	LDP	Kōmeitō	M	LDP	Kōmeitō	M	LDP	Kōmeitō	M	LDP	Kōmeitō	M	LDP	Kōmeitō
OSAKA CITY		Kita	1	1 (1)	0	1	1 (1)	0	1	1 (1)	0	1	1 (0)	0	1
		Miyakojima	1	1 (1)	0	1	0	0	1	1 (1)	0	1	1 (1)	0	1
		Fukushima	1	1 (1)	0	1	1 (1)	0	1	1 (1)	0	1	1 (1)	0	1
		Konohana	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1 (1)	0	1	0	0	Merged with Fukushima
		Chuo	1	1 (1)	0	1	1 (0)	0	1	1 (1)	0	1	1 (0)	0	1
		Nishi	1	1 (1)	0	1	1 (1)	0	1	1 (1)	0	1	1 (0)	0	1
		Minato	1	0	0	1	1 (1)	0	1	1 (1)	0	1	0	0	1
		Taisho	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	2
		Tennoji	1	0	0	1	1 (0)	0	1	1 (0)	0	1	0	0	1
		Naniwa	1	1 (1)	0	1	1 (1)	0	1	1 (1)	0	1	1 (0)	0	Merged with Tennoji
		Nishi Yodogawa	1	1 (1)	0	1	1 (1)	0	1	1 (1)	0	1	1 (1)	0	1
		Yodogawa	2	1 (1)	1 (1)	2	1 (1)	1 (1)	2	1 (1)	1 (1)	2	0	1 (1)	2
		Higashi Yodogawa	2	1 (0)	1 (1)	2	1 (1)	1 (1)	2	0	1 (1)	2	0	0	1 (1)
		Higashinari	1	1 (1)	0	1	1 (1)	0	1	1 (1)	0	1	1 (0)	0	1
		Ikuno	2	1 (1)	0	2	1 (1)	0	2	1 (1)	0	2	1 (1)	0	1
		Asahi	2	1 (1)	0	2	1 (1)	0	2	1 (1)	0	2	1 (1)	0	1
		Joto	2	1 (1)	0	2	1 (1)	0	2	1 (1)	0	2	1 (1)	0	2
		Turumi	1	1 (1)	0	1	1 (1)	0	1	1 (1)	0	1	0	0	1
		Abeno	1	1 (1)	0	1	1 (1)	0	1	1 (1)	0	1	1 (0)	0	1
		Suminoe	2	1 (1)	0	2	1 (1)	0	2	1 (1)	0	2	0	0	1
		Sumiyoshi	2	1 (1)	1 (1)	2	1 (1)	1 (1)	2	1 (1)	1 (1)	2	0	1 (1)	2
		Higashi Sumiyoshi	2	1 (1)	1 (1)	2	1 (1)	1 (1)	2	1 (1)	1 (1)	2	1 (0)	0	1
		Hirano	3	1 (1)	1 (1)	3	1 (1)	1 (1)	3	1 (1)	1 (1)	2	0	1 (0)	2
		Nishinari	2	1 (0)	1 (1)	2	0	1 (1)	2	0	1 (1)	2	1 (0)	1 (1)	Merged with Taisho
	35	20 (18)	6 (6)	35	20 (18)	6 (6)	35	19 (18)	6 (6)	34	13 (6)	6 (6)	27	18 (8)	5 (5)
SAKAI CITY		Sakai					2	1 (0)	1 (1)	2	0	1 (1)	1	1 (0)	0
		Naka					1	1 (1)	0	1	1 (0)	0	1	0	0
		Higashi (+Mihara)					1	1 (1)	0	1	1 (0)	0	1	1 (0)	0
		Nishi					2	1 (1)	0	2	1 (1)	0	1	1 (1)	0
		Minami					2	0	1 (1)	2	1 (1)	0	2	0	0
		Kita					2	1 (1)	0	2	1 (1)	0	2	1 (1)	0
	10	2 (2)	2 (2)	10	2 (2)	2 (2)	10	5 (4)	2 (2)	10	5 (3)	1 (1)	8	4 (2)	0
ENTIRE OSAKA	112	47 (43)	22 (22)	112	50 (40)	23 (23)	112	49 (44)	23 (23)	109	32 (12)	22 (21)	88	42 (21)	15 (15)

Appendix 4 District Magnitude (M) and Number of (Elected) Candidates in Osaka and Sakai City Assembly Elections

	1999 CA			2003 CA			2007 CA			2011 CA			2015 CA			
	M	LDP	Kōmeitō	M	LDP	Kōmeitō	M	LDP	Kōmeitō	M	LDP	Kōmeitō	M	LDP	Kōmeitō	
OSAKA CITY	Kita	3	2(2)	1(1)	3	1(1)	1(1)	3	1(1)	1(1)	3	0	1(1)	3	1(1)	0
	Miyakojima	3	1(1)	1(1)	3	1(1)	1(1)	3	1(1)	1(1)	3	1(1)	1(1)	3	1(1)	1(1)
	Fukushima	2	2(2)	0	2	2(2)	0	2	2(2)	0	2	1(1)	0	2	1(1)	0
	Konohana	3	1(1)	1(1)	3	1(1)	1(1)	3	1(1)	1(1)	2	0	1(1)	2	0	1(0)
	Chuo	2	2(1)	0	2	2(1)	0	2	2(1)	0	2	1(1)	0	2	1(1)	0
	Nishi	2	2(1)	0	2	1(1)	0	2	2(2)	0	2	1(1)	0	2	1(1)	0
	Minato	3	1(1)	1(1)	3	1(1)	1(1)	3	1(1)	1(1)	3	0	1(1)	3	1(1)	1(1)
	Taisho	3	1(1)	1(0)	3	1(0)	1(1)	3	1(0)	1(1)	3	1(0)	1(1)	3	1(0)	1(1)
	Tennoji	2	1(1)	0	2	1(1)	0	2	1(1)	0	2	1(1)	0	2	1(1)	0
	Naniwa	2	1(1)	0	2	1(1)	0	2	1(1)	0	2	1(0)	0	2	1(0)	0
	Nishi Yodogawa	3	1(1)	1(1)	3	1(1)	1(1)	3	1(1)	1(1)	3	1(1)	1(1)	3	1(1)	1(1)
	Yodogawa	5	2(2)	1(1)	5	2(2)	1(1)	5	2(2)	1(1)	5	1(1)	1(1)	5	1(1)	1(1)
	Higashi Yodogawa	6	2(1)	1(1)	6	1(1)	1(1)	6	1(1)	1(1)	6	1(1)	1(1)	6	1(1)	1(1)
	Higashinari	3	1(1)	1(1)	3	1(1)	1(1)	3	1(1)	1(1)	3	1(1)	1(1)	3	1(1)	1(1)
	Ikuno	6	3(3)	1(1)	5	3(3)	1(1)	5	3(3)	1(1)	5	1(1)	1(1)	5	1(1)	1(1)
	Asashi	4	1(1)	1(1)	4	1(0)	1(1)	4	1(0)	1(1)	3	1(0)	1(1)	3	0	1(1)
	Joto	5	2(2)	1(1)	5	2(1)	1(1)	5	2(1)	1(1)	5	1(1)	1(1)	5	1(1)	1(1)
	Turumi	3	1(1)	1(1)	3	1(0)	1(1)	3	1(1)	1(1)	3	1(0)	1(1)	3	1(0)	1(1)
	Abeno	4	2(2)	1(1)	4	2(2)	0	4	2(2)	1(1)	4	2(1)	1(1)	4	2(1)	1(1)
	Suminoe	4	1(1)	1(1)	4	1(1)	1(1)	4	1(1)	1(1)	4	1(1)	1(1)	4	1(1)	1(1)
	Sumiyoshi	6	3(3)	1(1)	6	2(2)	1(1)	6	2(2)	1(1)	5	2(1)	1(1)	5	1(1)	1(1)
	Higashi Sumiyoshi	5	2(2)	1(1)	5	2(2)	1(1)	5	2(2)	1(1)	5	1(1)	1(1)	5	1(1)	1(1)
	Hirano	6	2(2)	2(2)	6	2(2)	2(2)	6	2(1)	2(2)	6	1(1)	1(1)	6	1(1)	2(2)
	Nishinari	5	2(2)	1(1)	5	2(2)	1(1)	5	2(2)	1(1)	5	1(1)	1(1)	5	1(1)	1(1)
	TOTAL	90	39 (36)	20 (19)	89	35 (30)	19 (19)	89	36 (30)	20 (20)	86	23 (17)	19 (19)	86	23 (19)	19 (18)
SAKAI CITY	Sakai						9	3(2)	2(2)	9	3(1)	2(2)	8	1(1)	2(2)	
	Naka						8	2(2)	2(2)	8	2(1)	2(2)	7	2(1)	2(2)	
	Higashi (+Mihara)						5	2(1)	1(1)	5	2(2)	1(1)	5	2(2)	1(1)	
	Nishi						8	2(1)	2(2)	8	1(1)	2(2)	8	2(1)	2(2)	
	Minami						10	2(2)	2(2)	10	1(1)	2(2)	9	2(2)	2(2)	
	Kita						9	2(1)	3(3)	9	1(1)	2(2)	9	2(1)	2(2)	
Mihara																
TOTAL	52	12 (11)	12 (12)	52	11 (9)	13 (13)	49	13 (9)	12 (12)	49	10 (7)	11 (11)	46	11 (7)	11 (11)	

국문초록

도시부 선거구에서의 선거우위확보를 위한 자민당·공명당 협력

손석의

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본 연구는 1999년에서 현재까지 형성되어 온 일본 자민당과 공명당의 연립정권이 역사적 적대 관계나 정책 및 이념적 불일치, 선거에서의 위기 등 여러 쟁점에도 불구하고 어떻게 지속되어 왔는지 규명하고자 한다. 소위 ‘자민당 시스템’이 붕괴한 1990년대 이후 자민당이 그 우위체제를 유지해 올 수 있었던 가장 큰 이유는 공명당과의 연립, 특히 선거 연맹(electoral alliance)에 의해 선거우위 확보에 성공하였기 때문이었다. 구체적으로 선거제도 개혁 이후 자민당은 도시부에서 지지를 넓히지 못하면서 새로운 위기를 맞이하게 되었지만 이들 지역에 밀집한 공명당의 지지기반이 이런 위기를 극복하는 데 주요 기반이 되었다.

그러나 기계적인 ‘표의 교환’(vote-bartering)으로 성립된다는 자-공 선거협력에 대한 기존 연구들의 주장과 달리, 본 논문은 자-공 양당이 선거 자원의 불평등한 분배를 통해 위험을 최소화하기 위한 제도를 구축해왔음에 주목한다. 구체적으로, 자민당은 선거구 차원에서 공명당 지지층을 영입하기 위해 후보자 개인을 중심으로 한 동원제도를 활용하여 자민당 지지자들의 불만을 최소화 시켰고, 공명당은 추천제나 도도부현 레벨에서의 후보 검증제도를 이용하여 과도한 지원을 회피할 수 있는 내부적 견제장치를 고안해 온 것이다. 이러한 ‘조정 메카니즘’은 정치체계의 세 가지 레벨 (중앙, 도도부현, 선거구)에 도입되었으며, 자-공관계의 발전에는 대내외적 환경에 따라 변용하는 시기적 및 지역적 다양성과 유연성을 볼 수 있다. 본 논문은 이러한 선거협력에서의 유연성이 바로 정책성향과 이념적 가치를 공유하지 않은 자민당과 공명당이 지난 20년간 성공적으로 연립정권을 유지해왔음을 설명해줌과 동시에 선거연맹을 기반으로 한 양당 관계가 불확실성을 함께 내재하고 있음을 시사한다.

이러한 자-공 연립 관계가 과거 20년 동안 어떻게 변용되어 왔는지를 규명하기 위해, 본 연구를 다음과 같이 구성하였다. 제2장에서는 1990년대 정계 개편 와중에 역사적 및 이념적 대립이나 신진당(新進黨) 결성 과정에

보이던 자-공 간 갈등에도 불구하고 양당이 연립 합의에 이른 프로세스에 대해서 논의한다. 구체적으로는 새 선거제도 도입이 가져온 인식의 변화, 즉 양당체제로의 이행이라는 "가정"이 각 정당의 선호 형성에 끼친 영향에 주목한다. 동시에 신진당 구상을 둘러싼 공명당-창가학회 간의 긴장 관계와 그 경험, 이후의 자-공 선거협력의 토대가 되었다. 또한 이 시기에 자민당이 치열한 창가학회 공격 전략에서 자공연립정권의 모색으로 180도 태도를 전환한 배경에는, 정당내에 주도권이 국정선거를 거치면서 리베랄 보수로부터 강경파 보수에 전환 된 것에 의한 것이었다.

제3장에서는 선거협력의 제도에 대해 서술한다. 자민당과 공명당은 다양한 자원 분배의 논리를 내세워 중앙·도도부현·선거구의 세 가지 레벨에서 '유연한 적합성'을 실현시키는 데 성공하였다. 공명당의 역사적 경험이 자민당과의 선거협력에 있어 리스크를 최소화하는 메커니즘을 도입하는 데 중요한 역할을 하였고, 그것이 바로 집단적·일률적 지지가 아닌 개인 단위의 후보자 검증 및 표의 동원 제도 도입을 선호한 점에 단적으로 나타났다.

제4장 및 제5장에서는 이러한 유연한 적합 메커니즘이, 자-공 선거 협력에서 시계열적 및 지역적 다양성으로 나타나는 현상을 분석한다. 우선 제4장에서는 2000년부터 2014년까지 시행된 총선을 분석해, 특히 도시 지역에서의 선거협력의 변용에 대해 고찰한다. 과거 여섯 차례 총선에서의 선거 협력을 분석해보면, 자공 협력관계가 지속된 이유로 공명당 지지자들의 높은 일관성뿐만 아니라 양당체제의 부상, 부동산의 약진, 신당의 등장 등 변해가는 내외적 선거환경에 대한 유연한 적응 및 협력의 제도화를 볼 수 있다. 제5장에서는, 자-공 선거협력의 지역적 다양성을 단적으로 드러내는 사례로 도쿄와 오사카 지역의 사례를 비교분석한다. 우선 지방선거제도의 차이와 그 지역에서의 자공간의 힘의 균형의 다양성이 도쿄에서는 "유리적 결합 (disengaged coalesce)"으로서의 자공 관계를 구축해 온 반면, 오사카의 자-공 관계는 "상호 의존(mutual dependence)"으로 분류 할 수 있다. 이로 인해 2010년대 이후 정당 간 경쟁의 새로운 변수로 떠오른 지방정당의 부상은 각 지역의 자-공관계에 다른 영향을 미치게 되었다. 즉, 오사카유신회와 일본유신회의 등장이 공명당의 자민당과의 전략적 관계를 "선택적 협력"으로 변환 시킨 반면, 도쿄에서는 "유리적 협력"을 유지시킨 것이다. 그러나 도쿄에서의 자공관계는 높은 안정성을 유지하다가 보다는, 2017년 도쿄도의회선거에서 공명당이 코이케 유리코 도지사가 이끄는 도민 퍼스트에 전면적으로 협력한 사례에서 보이듯, 그 유리성으로 인해 자-공 간에 제3자에 대한 인식 차이가 발생할 때 단숨에 불안정화될 요소를 내재하고 있다.

마지막으로 자-공 선거연맹의 한계 및 전망에 대해 고찰한다. 첫번째 한계로는 국정·지방 선거에 공통적으로 나타나는 공명당의 지지기반 축소를 들 수 있다. 둘째, 2012년 이후의 선거결과에 보이듯 민주당 정권 붕괴 이후 복귀한 자-공연립정권은 그 구심력이 회복된 것이 아니라 야당의 분열로 인해 우위를 유지해 오는 데 성공한 것이었다. 오히려 도시부 선거결과를 보면 상당수의 "비자공표"가 존재하는 것을 알 수 있다. 최근 자민당의 우경화 드라이브는 이들의 "비자공표"가 자-공선거연맹을 제압할 수 있는 잠재적 위기요소라는 자각에 자민당이 새로운 지지층 개척에 나선 결과라고 해석할 수 있다. 그러나 이러한 우파 세력과 중도보수를 지향하는 공명당의 지지층은 근본적으로 어울리지 않는 사회 집단임으로 자민당의 우파 접근은 자-공 연립의 근간을 뒤흔들 수 있는 위험을 내포하고 있다.

본 연구가 제시하는 함의는 다음과 같다. 우선 90년대 정치개혁 이후 자민당이 선거에서의 우위를 유지해 올 수 있었던 가장 큰 요인은, 공명당과의 선거연맹이 선거제도 개편이 가져 온 "도시의 도전"에 대치할 토대를 제공하였기 때문이다. 둘째, 이러한 공명당 지지표의 영입은 개인 후원회를 중심으로 한 자민당 후보자들의 득표 조직의 한계, 자민당의 지방 조직의 미비, 그리고 도시 지역에서의 경쟁력의 취약성이란 자민당의 허점을 보완하는 데 성공하였다. 즉 일본의 선거경쟁에서 조직표가 가진 중요성을 충분히 인식할 필요가 있다는 것을 나타낸다. 마지막으로 자공연립 사례는 기존의 연립연구에서 거론되는 의석수의 논의나 정책성향이 아닌 선거연맹이 성공적인 연립정권을 만들어 낼 수 있다는 점을 시사한다.

Keywords: 자민당, 공명당, 선거연맹, 도시선거, 자민당 우위체제
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抄録

都市部選挙区における選挙優位確保のための 自民党・公明党協力

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本研究の目的は、自民党と公明党による連立が、歴史的敵対関係や政策・イデオロギーの不一致、また選挙における危機局面にもかかわらず、なぜ、どのようにして過去20年にわたり持続できたかを解明することである。この研究では、いわゆる「自民党システム」の崩壊後、自民党優位体制の維持が可能であったのは公明党との連立、特に選挙連盟 (electoral alliance) に依るところが大きいという立場に立ち、都市部に密集する公明党の強固な支持基盤が、これらの地域での支持を広めることができなかった自民党にとって、選挙制度改革後に浮上した新たな危機を乗り越える土台となった、と論じるところから始まる。

同時に、自公選挙協力が、あらかじめ約束されたいわゆる総選挙時における規則的な「票の交換」ではなく、両党間における選挙資源の不均一な分配に特徴づけられていることに着目する。自公は、候補者推薦や票の割り当てなどの制度化を通して、自民党は個人単位における公明党票の組み込み、また一方で公明党は自民党に対する過剰支持を避けるための内的メカニズムを考案・定着させた。このような「調節メカニズム」は政治体系の3つのレベル(中央、都道府県、選挙区)にそれぞれ導入され、これらが自公選挙協力に見られる時系列的・地域的不均一として現れることになる。つまり、自公関係は一方的な集中化の過程としてではなく、内外の環境に対する柔軟な適合として特徴づけられる。そしてこの「柔軟性」こそが、自公間に存在する政策・理念の不一致を克服する上で決定的に重要な役割を果たした。

このような自公連立関係が過去20年間でどのように変遷してきたのかを解明するために、本研究を以下のように構成した。第2章では、1990年代の政界再編の渦中において、それまでの歴史的・イデオロギー的対立や新進党結成に代表される自公間の深刻

な葛藤にもかかわらず、両党が連立合意に至ったプロセスについて論じる。具体的には、新選挙制度の導入がもたらした認識の変化、つまり二大政党制への移行という「想定」が各政党の選好形成に与えた影響に着目した。同時に、新進党構想時代の公明党一創価学会間における緊張関係とその経験が、後の自公選挙協力における土台となった。一方同時期に自民党がし烈な創価学会攻撃から自公連立政権成立の模索へと180度方向転換した背景には、その時期の政党内の主導権争いが、国政選挙を重ねるうちにリベラル派から強硬派へと移行したことに起因した。

第3章では、多様な資源分配の論理を組み入れ、中央・都道府県・選挙区レベルにおいて柔軟な適合を実現させるために、「選挙協力」をどのように制度化していったかについて論じる。公明党の歴史的経験が、自民党との選挙協力におけるリスクを最小限化させるメカニズムを導入する上で重要な役割を担い、そのことは集团的・一律的支持ではなく、「個人単位」の候補者査定および票の動員を好んだ点に端的に現れている。

以下第4・第5章では、このような柔軟な適合のメカニズムが、自公選挙協力において時系列的・地域的多様性としてどのように現われたかを分析する。まず第4章では、2000年から2014年までに実施された総選挙を分析し、特に都市部における選挙協力の変遷について考察する。過去6回の総選挙において、不適合とも映る自公協力関係の継続理由として、公明党支持者の強い一貫性のみならず、二大政党間競争、浮動層の躍進、新党の登場など、その時々内外的環境変化に対し柔軟に適応し得る協力論理の蓄積と制度化を挙げることができる。第5章では、自公選挙協力の地域的多様性を端的に示す事例として、東京と大阪のケースを比較分析する。まず地方ごとの選挙制度の違いと、地元における自公間の力のバランスの多様性により、東京における自公関係は「遊離的合体」として特徴づけられている一方、大阪のそれは「相互依存」として分類できる。さらに2010年以降の政党間競争の新たな変数として浮上した地方政党は、性質の異なる地方レベルの自公関係に対し新たな影響を与えた。つまり、大阪維新の会および国政における日本維新の会の登場に対して、公明党は大阪では自民党に対する「選択的協力」を、一方東京では「遊離的協力」を公明党は戦略的に選択した

と言える。反面、東京における自公関係は表面的には安定性を維持しているかのように見えるが、2017年の東京都議会選挙において小池百合子東京都知事が率いる都民ファーストの会に公明党が全面的に協力した事例にも見られるように、その遊離性に起因して、自公間で第3者に対する認識に差異が生じた場合、一気に不安定化する要素を内包している。

結びとして、自公選挙連盟の限界について考察する。第一に、国政・地方選挙に共通して見られる公明党支持基盤の縮小が挙げられる。第二に、2012年以降の選挙結果から明らかなように、民主党政権崩壊後に復調した自公連立政権は、野党の分裂により可能となったのであり、選挙結果からはむしろかなりの数の「非自公票」が都市部に存在していることが分かる。最近の自民党による右傾化へのドライブは、これらの「非自公票」が、条件次第では自公選挙協力を上回る集票力をもつ潜在的危機であるという自覚に立つものであり、新たな支持層の開拓は都市部における選挙危機への対策であると解釈できる。いずれにせよ、このような右派勢力と、中道保守を志向する公明党支持層とは根本的に相容れない社会集団であるため、自民党の右派へのアプローチは自公連立の根底を揺るがしうる危険を孕んでいるのである。

以上の本研究が示唆する点として、以下の三点を挙げることができる。まず、野党の分裂により回復・維持されてきたかのように見える政治改革以降の自民党優位体制は、実際には同党が90年代以降浮上した新たな「都市部選挙区での挑戦」に対峙することを可能とする公明党との選挙協力によって成立した。二つ目に、このような公明票の取り込みにより、個人後援会を中心とした自民党の集票組織の限界、政党地方組織の不備、そして都市部における競争力の脆弱性といった、いわゆる自民党の弱点を補うことに成功した。つまり、そのことは日本の選挙競争において、組織票が未だもつ重要性を十分に認識する必要性を改めて示している。そして最後に、既存の連立政権研究が、議会における数合わせや参加政党同士の政策的・イデオロギー的類似性に重点を置いていた点とは対照的に、自公連立政権の事例は、効率的かつ有効な選挙連盟が、持続可能な連立政権の成立を可能にすることを端的に示していると言える。

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Keywords: 自民党、公明党、選挙連盟、都市選挙、自民党優位体制
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