Democracy Without Competition:
Opposition Failure in One-Party Dominant Japan

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Party Competition Failure: Challenges to Democracy

• Problem of one party dominance
  – “Uncommon Democracies”

• If the party is popular → not a problem

• If the party is unpopular → failure of democracy
Ruling Party Unpopularity: Failure of Democracy, the Japanese Case

Japan

- Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) Rules
- Economic Collapse
- Political Corruption
- Voter anger
  - 55% of public: no party affiliation
  - Only 20-30% support for ruling LDP
  - Typically low cabinet approval
  - 44% dislike LDP

➢ But no successful challenger to LDP
The Puzzle: Party Competition Failure in Japan

What can explain opposition party failure in a democratic system where the ruling party is very unpopular?
Outline

I. Introduction – Party Competition Failure: Challenges to Democracy
II. Framework
III. Background on Japan
IV. Candidate Experience as Key to Party Success
V. Analysis of Local Opposition Failure
   A. Japan
   B. Comparative Typology
VI. Implications for New Democracies
Part II – Framework

The Impact of Candidacies: Explaining Party Competition Failure in Japan

• Key to party success: strong candidates
  – Japan: Weak opposition candidates

• Underlying problem: opposition weakness at subnational level

• But, **WHY** subnational opposition failure?
Central Argument

Clientelism

+ 

Financially Centralized Government Structure

Failure in Subnational Office Elections by Parties not in the National Government
Part III – Background on Japan and Existing Explanations for Opposition Failure

A History of LDP Dominance

1955-1990
- LDP: majority of the seats in every House of Representatives (HR) election
- But slow decline in LDP support

1990-1995
- Growing Anti-LDP sentiment
- LDP split and temporary loss of power (8/93-6/94)

1996-Present
- Anger toward LDP remains
  - Birth of centrist Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ)
- BUT LDP dominance continues
Past Failure to Explain
LDP Dominance/Opposition Failure

I. Party Popularity
   • Miracle Economy
   • Japanese Culture
   • LDP Policies

Problem:
   ➢ LDP is not popular. It has not won majority of the vote since 1963.

II. Electoral Institutions
   • Opposition coordination problems

Problems:
   ➢ Electoral system affected opposition and LDP.
   ➢ Opposition failure continues under new electoral system.
Part IV – Candidate “Quality” or Experience is Key to Party Success

Chart 1: LDP Success: It’s the Candidates, not the Party

**Proportion of Party Votes Won**

**Proportion of Candidate Votes Won**
Implication: The Importance of Candidates

LDP Has Candidate Advantage

• Confirmed by opposition
• LDP has more incumbents

The Importance of “Quality” New Candidates

• Jacobson (1990): “Quality”/experienced U.S. Congressional candidates more likely to win
• Best source of “quality”: subnational level office

• LDP advantage in “quality” of new candidates too?
What is a “Quality” Candidate?

- Former local office holders
- Other: Former member of Upper House of parliament, former bureaucrat, former television newscasters, those who “inherited” seat from family member
**Chart 2: All “Quality” Candidates Do Well, But LDP Has Higher Proportion of Quality Candidates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>LDP</th>
<th>DPJ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Candidates</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Candidates</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of New Candidates</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who Were “Quality”</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of “Non-Quality” New Candidates Who Won</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of “Quality” New Candidates Who Won</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Quality” LDP and DPJ Candidates in 2000 (300 total single member districts)
Chart 3: LDP As A Party Is Not More Popular
LDP Success Is Due To Its Candidate Advantage

Former Local Office Holders More Likely To Win
(Predicted Probabilities of Victory)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Non-Quality</th>
<th>Former Local Office Holder</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Runs against DPJ or LDP Incumbent</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Incumbent Opponent</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
<td>58.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

LDP advantage is in its higher proportion of quality candidates and former local office holders.
Part V – The Underpinnings of the Recruitment Problems of Japan’s Opposition

Q: Why doesn’t the opposition run more candidates with local office experience?

A: Few office holders belong to opposition parties at the subnational level.

The Reason

Clientelism 
+ 
Financially Centralized Government Structure

Failure in Subnational Office Elections by Parties not in the National Government
Definitions

Clientelism
• Contrasts with “issue-based” politics
• Patronage and pork barrel

Financially Centralized Systems
• Subnational reliance on central government financing
• Transfers to localities: politicized
Clientelism + Fiscal Centralization Encourages Local Pols To Affiliate With Nat’l Ruling Party

Clientelist Systems
- Mainstream local politicians must show they can bring in patronage

Financially Centralized Systems
- Local level politicians’ primary function: help deliver benefits from center

Clientelist + Financially Centralized Systems
- To gain central funding, local politicians have incentive to ally with national ruling parties
Chart 4: Local LDP Hegemony, Utter Opposition Failure at Local Level

Proportion of Legislative Seats Held by the LDP (1970-1997)

Proportion of Seats Held by Non-LDP Parties (1970-1997)
National-Local Pipelines of Pork: The Reason for Local Opposition Failure

• LDP local hegemony due to efforts to maintain “pipeline” between center and localities

• LDP patron-client relationships at core of pipelines

• Pipelines
  – Discourage local party defection from LDP
  – Encourage local party defection to the LDP
If Pipelines Are Important, What Should We See?

• If fiscal dependence is important to local elections
  ➢ Opposition most successful where the pipeline is less important

The opposition’s greatest success should occur in the most autonomous prefectures.
Definition of “Autonomy”
Local Fiscal Capability Index

Autonomy Index = \( \frac{\text{Locality's Revenues (i.e., Local Taxes)}}{\text{Locality's Spending "Needs"}} \)

Note: Central government caps local tax rates across country
Opposition Wins More Assembly Seats In Autonomous Prefectures

Chart 5: Opposition Prefectural Assembly Success by Level of Autonomy (1967-1991)

Proportion of Prefectural Assembly Seats Held by Opposition Parties

Local Autonomy Index

R = .57
Greater Opposition Local Success in Autonomous Prefectures: Review of Statistical Results

Prefectural Assemblies
• Even controlling for other variables,
  – More opposition assembly members in places and times of greater autonomy

Mayors
• During periods of greater autonomy:
  – More opposition mayors
• During periods of lesser autonomy:
  – Fewer opposition mayors
  – Rise in number of opposition mayors who also sought LDP endorsement
Comparative Perspective:
Japan Is The Rule, Not The Exception

Chart 6: Comparative Typology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party-Voter Linkages</th>
<th>Level of Financial Centralization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Programmatic-Issue Based</strong></td>
<td>Decentralized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Clientelist</strong></td>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brazil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Italy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mexico</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Local** one-party dominance common in Clientelist/Financially Centralized cases.
  - Exceptions similar to Japan’s
Part VI: Conclusion
Summary of Key Points

(1) Importance of “quality” candidates

(2) Major Contribution:

\[
\text{Clientelism} + \text{Fiscal Centralization} \downarrow \text{Local Opposition Failure}
\]

(3) Explanation for opposition failure in Japan at the national level: A combination of (1) and (2).
Final Thoughts

• A Vicious Circle in Japan
  – Parties cannot gain strength at national level without gaining at local.
  – Cannot gain strength at local level without holding power at national.

• Hope for Japan’s Opposition?
  – National party developments (new LDP defection?)
  – Decentralization movement
  – Growing anti-clientelist sentiments

• Implications for New Democracies
  – New democracies likely to be clientelistic
  – Important to create institutions that decentralize fiscal power
    ➢Decentralization can raise the quality of democracy
LDP As A Party Is Not More Popular
LDP Success Is Due To Its Candidate Advantage

Chart 3: Probit Model of New Candidate Success in 2000 (LDP and DPJ)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Aggregated Model</th>
<th>Disaggregated Model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coef. (SE)</td>
<td>Coef. (SE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>1.077 (0.282)**</td>
<td>0.702 (0.333)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former Local Politician</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HC</td>
<td>1.506 (0.708)**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bureaucrat</td>
<td>1.549 (0.468)**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV</td>
<td>1.729 (0.860)**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inherit</td>
<td>1.549 (0.468)**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LDP</td>
<td>-0.457 (0.297)</td>
<td>-0.476 (0.313)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campaign Expenditures</td>
<td>0.851 (0.851)</td>
<td>0.405 (1.187)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opponent Inherits</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak Inherit</td>
<td>1.023 (0.822)</td>
<td>1.109 (0.824)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ran in 96</td>
<td>0.525 (0.288)*</td>
<td>0.527 (0.295)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>0.293 (0.155)*</td>
<td>0.338 (0.162)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incumbent Opponent</td>
<td>-0.441 (0.360)</td>
<td>-0.294 (0.442)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Incumbent Opponent</td>
<td>-0.839 (0.296)**</td>
<td>-0.784 (0.301)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-1.189 (0.582)**</td>
<td>-1.294 (0.667)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Correctly Predicted</td>
<td>79.0</td>
<td>88.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodman-Kruskal λ (PRE)</td>
<td>.244</td>
<td>.244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chi-sq</td>
<td>55.52</td>
<td>42.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prob&gt;chi-sq</td>
<td>0.0000</td>
<td>0.0000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo R-sq</td>
<td>.2662</td>
<td>.2282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log Likelihood</td>
<td>-76.520</td>
<td>-72.329</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05 (one-tail), **p<.05 (two-tail), ***p<.01 (two-tail)

- “LDP”: negative and non-significant
- “Quality” & “Former Local Politician”: positive and significant
- Former Local Pols: 15-30 percentage points more likely to win than non-quality cands
# Opposition Wins More Assembly Seats In Autonomous Prefectures: Statistical Evidence


Dependent Variable=Proportion of Seats Won by Opposition in Prefecture $i$ in Election $t$ (with logit transformation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Coef.</th>
<th>(Std. Error)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-0.543</td>
<td>(0.129) ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Autonomy</strong></td>
<td>0.182</td>
<td>(0.055) ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP Growth</td>
<td>-0.033</td>
<td>(0.008) ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lag of Dependent Variable (Pref. $i$, Election $t-1$)</td>
<td>0.718</td>
<td>(0.051) ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971 (dummy variable)</td>
<td>0.254</td>
<td>(0.055) ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of Seats Won by Opposition at HR Level in Prefecture $i$ in last HR election before $t$</td>
<td>0.588</td>
<td>(0.187) ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
<td>280</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>F (5, 46)</strong></td>
<td>463.95</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prob &gt; F</strong></td>
<td>0.0000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>R-Sq</strong></td>
<td>0.755</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of clusters (prefectures): 47

* $p<.05$ (one-tail), ** $p<.05$ (two-tail), *** $p<.01$ (two-tail)

• Autonomy is statistically significant and positive
Greater Autonomy Leads to a Larger Proportion of Local Executives Who Are Progressive

Chart A: Mean Levels of Autonomy and Proportion of Local Executives Who Are Opposition
Chart B: Rise in Proportion of LDP-Affiliated Mayors, While Decline in Opposition-only Mayors Once Greater Dependence on Central Government
Chart C: Fewer Progressive Mayors When Fewer Cities Operate at a Deficit

Proportion of Localities Operating at a Deficit

Proportion of Localities with Opposition Mayor

Year

Chart D: Correlates of Opposition Party Success or Failure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE OF SYSTEM</th>
<th>Clientelist?</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Germany, Sweden, UK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>Canada, US</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mexico, Taiwan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>Austria, Israel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>Italy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Japan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

COMpetitive Opposition

FAILURE