

Appendix 5 – Things cut for space reasons from Chapter 5

Counter Arguments

Are there alternative explanations for the failure of Japan's opposition to succeed at the local level? In Chapter 2, I discussed in detail a number of arguments used to explain opposition failure at the national level in Japan. Some might be applied to opposition failure at the local level as well, but just as I reject these arguments as insufficient for explaining national level failure, they also cannot account fully for local level failure. Neither theories based on culture nor those based on electoral rules can explain the failure of opposition parties in local elections. Given what is in fact very thin support for the LDP (and considerable hostility), there does not seem to be a cultural predilection to serve the party and, moreover, culture cannot explain why the opposition does so much worse at the subnational level than at the national level.

As for electoral rules, one might posit a local-level version of the argument, saying that the failure of the opposition at the local level is due to the continued use of SNTV/MMD in prefectural assembly elections. However, even when SNTV/MMD was used at both the local and national level, the opposition did significantly worse at the local level. This is particularly noteworthy because prefectural assembly races also frequently utilize districts of significantly greater magnitude than those at the national level. Partly because the largest magnitude of these prefectural-level districts are in relatively urban areas—where voters are less tied into conservative politicians' networks and where governments are less dependent on financial support from the center—but also partly because they reduce many of the problems surrounding the coordination of candidates, opposition parties are typically markedly *more* successful in such large districts than they are in smaller national-level SNTV/MMD districts or the municipal-level SNTV/MMD assembly districts. That is, because the large-magnitude districts (by definition) maintain so many seats, even the smallest groups can win seats, so there is very little need to coordinate on jointly endorsed candidates. As a result, in such districts, opposition parties ought to do better than they do in the smaller district magnitudes that exist at the national level.

Perhaps a more subtle electoral-system effect might be at work here. That is, more autonomous prefectures tend to be urban, and urban prefectures have more large-magnitude districts. Perhaps the correlation between autonomy and opposition success is therefore spurious and opposition parties actually win more seats in autonomous prefectures because such prefectures have more districts with large magnitudes. There are two reasons for rejecting this argument. First, in more financially autonomous prefectures, opposition parties win a substantial number of seats, even in small-magnitude districts. It is in the more financially dependent prefectures that the opposition does particularly poorly in the districts with low magnitudes. Second, much of the opposition's failure in the smaller local-assembly districts comes not from the coordination difficulties that are usually attributed to SNTV/MMD, but rather from opposition parties' failure to even put up a candidate. This point is particularly consistent with my argument about the effects of clientelism combined with financial dependence. In such systems, in areas that are highly dependent on the central government, ambitious candidates simply have less reason to run under opposition banners.

Urban-ness, not Autonomy?

In the book, I make a number of arguments indicating why urban-ness—as opposed to autonomy—is not sufficient to explain variation in opposition local success. Let me offer one additional one here. If the argument counter to mine were correct, opposition parties would do

roughly as poorly at the national and local levels. This suggests that the proportion of HR seats held by opposition parties in a given prefecture would correlate very highly with the proportion of seats held by opposition parties at the prefectural level, to the extent that it might wash out any effect of Autonomy. However, in the regression results in Scheiner (2005), even while controlling for HROpp—the proportion of HR seats held by opposition parties in a given prefecture—Autonomy remains statistically significant.

Discussion of Deficit Spending?

It might be argued that I have reversed the causal arrow and that the decline in the number of progressive mayors actually led to the decline in the number of cities in the red. However, there are two reasons to dismiss this argument. First, despite only a moderately small drop in the number of progressive mayors between 1975 and 1979, there was a very substantial decline in the number of cities in the red. The decline is particularly striking given the additional spending needs the localities must have had in the late 1970s because of the second oil crisis.

Second, the most serious drop in the number of progressive mayors did not occur until after there was a bottoming out of the number of localities working at a deficit. Most likely, voters and candidates were used to the fluctuations in their local governments' capacity to run deficits and were unprepared for the long-term nature of the constraints placed on their budgetary autonomy. That is, voters may have begun to appreciate that budgetary austerity was going to last quite a while only after the second oil crisis arrived in 1979, and only then did they begin to seek alternatives with tighter links to the center. Many progressive local officials who had been elected on the promise of welfare spending were seen as going back on their word because they had less money to use as local sources and central spending dried up (Curtis 1988: 72-74).

Importance of Ties to Ruling Coalition at the Prefectural Level/Ability of JCP to Affect Policy?

The rise in joint LDP-opposition local executives provides evidence against two potential counter-arguments to my own in this chapter. Some critics might claim that I am overstating the importance of ties to parties in the national government in Japan. Rather, they might argue that, for the sake of supporting one's constituency, it is just as important, if not more so, to be affiliated with the ruling coalition at the *prefectural* level. There is no doubt that any politician would, all else being equal, prefer to be a member of the ruling party at both the national and prefectural level.

However, the fact that the governors, the *leaders* of prefectural ruling coalitions, tended to prefer to affiliate with the national ruling party indicates how important it is to hold close ties to central governmental funding. In an analysis of prefectural governors prior to 1993, Weiner (2001) finds that roughly half of them who were elected as progressive, non-LDP members in their first election linked up with the LDP for their second election. These progressive executives were delighted to defeat the LDP in their first election, but having done so, did not want to be detached from the national government as their major source of funding (*Ibid.*). (To be fair, Weiner (personal communication) also notes that part of the reason for the pan-party support for governors relates to the great power of governors at the prefectural level, as LDP prefectural assembly members were loath to be detached from the governor and therefore pushed hard to get the governor to accept their endorsement.)

Moreover, unlike countries such as Brazil, which are noted for their “reverse coattails effects” (Ames 1994), national legislators in Japan do not demonstrate a concern for linking up with whatever party the prefectural governor belongs to (Weiner 2001). In sum, the importance

of ties to the central government powerfully shaped the decision of subnational office holders to create links to specific political parties, those governing at the center.

Other critics of my model might argue that in fact being a member of the ruling coalition is not necessary for a politician to provide constituent service. For example, the Japan Communist Party (JCP) found some success in urban areas by acting as a “gadfly,” lobbying local bureaucrats for local services until it got what it wanted. But the JCP typically used this tactic successfully in *urban* areas, which typically receive relatively little money from the central government and tend to be more autonomous. They are, therefore, more like the Clientelist/Financially Decentralized type I discussed in Chapter 4, where partisanship is usually less important. (Some urban areas may even be more like the Programmatic/Financially-Decentralized type I discussed.) Also, JCP politicians’ ability to act as service providers was clearly an exception in Japan, where, to gain greater access to pork, Japan’s non-Communist parties have often sought to link up with the LDP behind a single candidate in prefectural governors’ races (Ibid.).

Growing Numbers of Local Level Independents

As of 1997, roughly one quarter of all of Japan’s prefectural assembly members held no party affiliation (Japan Statistical Yearbook). If ties to the ruling party were so critical, why were there so many independents? There are two main reasons: increasing hostility toward parties and attempts by politicians to hedge their bets. In 1970, roughly 94 percent of prefectural assembly members were affiliated with a party. But in the 1970s LDP scandals led to an increase in hostility toward political parties, and the number of local politicians affiliated with a party declined to around 85 percent over most of the 1980s and early 1990s. Most of these independents were conservatives, who eliminated their party affiliation partly to curry favor with a public that was growing antagonistic to parties. At the same time, while officially independent, a very large number of these candidates maintained tight links to LDP Diet members.

The largest increase in independents occurred in 1995, the first unified local election after the 1993-94 national party realignment. The 1995 election had been preceded by two years of multiple changes in the partisan composition of the government. Prefectural assembly members with no party affiliation jumped from roughly 15 to 25 percent of the entire pool. In large measure, this was because of concern with the volatile state of politics at the national level. It was one thing to run as an independent, and therefore not openly oppose the ruling party (whichever party that was at the time), but for many politicians it was quite another to get caught in the opposing party. As I discuss in greater detail later in this chapter, a number of prefectural assembly members had defected from the LDP along with a member of the Diet in 1993-94. At first, many even joined new parties with their patron Diet member. However, because of confusion over who was to control the national government, many became independents right off the bat and after the LDP came back into power in 1994, many prefectural assembly members who had earlier joined new parties also eliminated party affiliation (interviews with LDP national Diet defectors, May-July 1999). Increasing voter distrust of parties was important as well, and led to more candidates becoming official independents, while still maintaining close ties to particular LDP Diet members.

Pan-party Governors/“*Ainori*”

Pan-party” endorsed governors were very common in the 1990s, but in the late 90s and early 2000s there also appeared a number of incumbents who eschewed party affiliations

altogether. Usually, such governors appeared in urban areas that, as noted earlier, had less need for ties to central governmental funding, but there were cases of high profile independent governors in other prefectures as well. The most high profile of these governors was probably Tanaka Yasuo elected in 2000 in Nagano. However, cases like Tanaka's are not too difficult to understand. To begin with, Tanaka was elected in Nagano, where the leading national politician in the prefecture was Hata Tsutomu, one of the leaders of the opposition. In addition, as a well known novelist, Tanaka was a celebrity, who attracted support simply because of his name. Finally, support for Tanaka appeared to be founded on his personal appeal and did not indicate a widespread move by voters to eliminate the prefecture's ties to the center. While officially maintaining no party affiliation, a large proportion of Nagano's prefectural assembly was made up of conservative politicians with very close links to the LDP and who placed great emphasis on maintaining a steady stream of centrally funded projects in the prefecture (Scheiner 2003). Despite Tanaka's very forceful campaigning against them, the prefectural assembly members had no trouble getting reelected 2003 (Asahi Shinbun online, April 15, 2003).

Note that Figure 5.6 in the book begins with 1976, the first year listed in Richardson's (1997) table. Also note that in some ways, Figure 5.4 in fact *over*-estimates the strength of the opposition, by including purely centrist mayors—who, as I noted above, were seen to have moderately close ties to the LDP during the 1980s—in the Opposition-only group.

LDP Advantages in Recruitment

In addition to issues related to the Clientelist/Centralized system, the LDP has other advantages in recruiting local candidates. Where politicians seek office out of personal electoral ambition, the national ruling party is clearly the best option. The national ruling party has a larger number of high positions to which the candidate can aspire. The party itself maintains a larger store of resources to share with candidates. And of course access to the party also means greater access to national governmental patronage that greatly helps candidates' electoral chances. As noted in Chapter 4, in financially centralized systems such as Japan's, local governments are extremely limited in their ability to engage in serious policy making. Local policy innovation only occurred in Japan once local governments gained greater financial autonomy from the center. Politicians' best chance at policymaking is in the ruling party-controlled central government. For this reason, all else being equal, candidates with policymaking aspirations—as long as they do not run counter to the policies of the LDP—will seek to work their way up within the ruling party, a path that typically begins with election to local political office under the party's banner.

Additional Background

In a survey of local officials in Japan, nearly every respondent cited insufficient governmental financing as, at a minimum, “quite important” to their subnational governments' financial considerations (Kobayashi 1999).

The use of intermediate groups in campaigning is by no means unique to Japan, but it appears to be particularly prevalent in Japan because of the lack of strong local *party* organizations (Park 1998a: 223).

Urban-Rural Differences

In rural areas, where a larger percentage of beneficiaries live and vote in the area, it is far easier to both target specific, geographically concentrated groups and claim credit for spending.

Electoral Statistics

The mean proportion of seats held over 1970-1997 by the LDP at the national level was .540 (with a standard deviation of .058); for the LDP at the prefectural level it was .560 (standard deviation of .047); for the non-LDP parties at the national level it was .445 (standard deviation of .052); but for the non-LDP at the prefectural level it was .302 (with the tiny standard deviation of .022).

“On average within each prefecture, the opposition won ten percentage points more seats in national races than in prefectural assembly races, and the opposition won a larger share of seats in the national level race in 83 percent (273 out of 328) of the prefectural cases in the data set.” (The difference between the two levels is statistically significant at the .0001 level.) Out of the other 55 cases, in three cases the opposition won an equal proportion in each and in 26 cases, the opposition did better at the prefectural assembly level by a matter of only 5 percentage points or less.

Systematic Analysis of Opposition Prefectural Assembly Success

There are two contradictory forces, which were parsed out in the regression results in Scheiner (2005). Economic Growth (in the year before the election) leads to LDP support. However, the increased autonomy that grew out of (longer term) economic growth is expressed in the Autonomy variable and leads to opposition success. Note that the two types of economic growth I refer to here are not the same thing as one another and there is no collinearity problem.

The significant and positive sign on 1967-71 in the analysis in Scheiner (2005) further documents local opposition success in late 1960s and early 1970s.

Additional Statistics

Deficit Spending

In the first half of the 1960s, roughly 20-25 percent of all cities were operating at a deficit, while from the late 1960s to early 1970s, only about 10-15 percent were (Jichishō, various years).

Growth of Policy Innovation in the 1970s

As conservative local governments saw that local governments could engage in greater policy innovation, they innovated as well. Reed notes the example of the conservative Kumamoto Prefecture’s ordinances relating to medium-sized retail stores in the mid-70s (1986: 53).

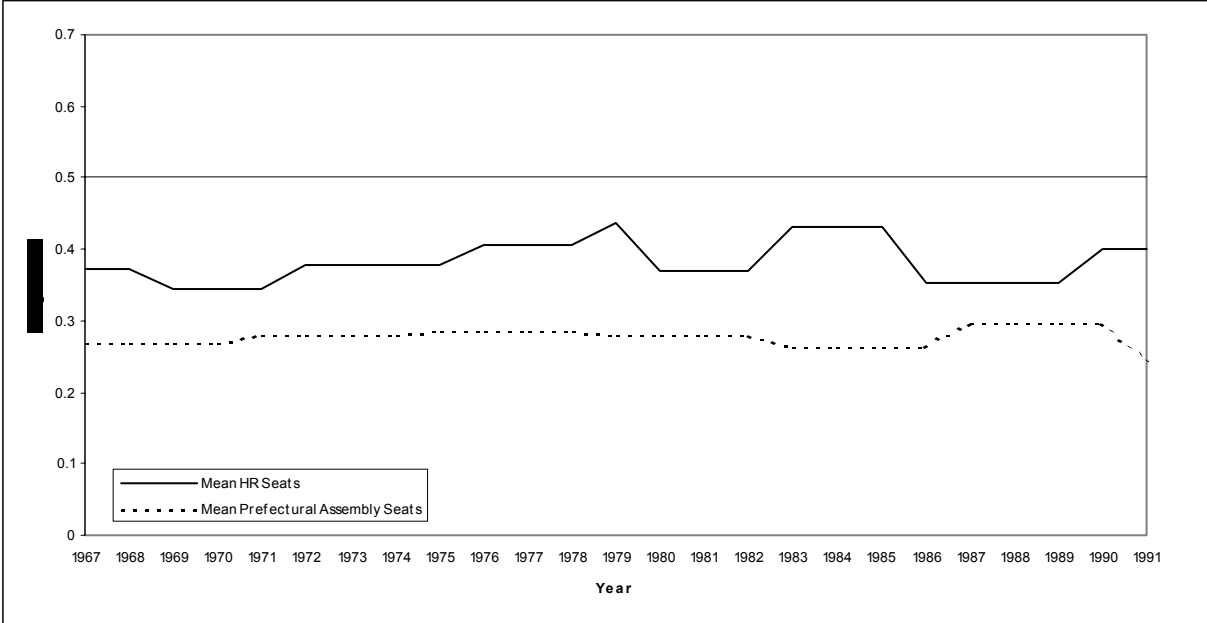
Definition of “Progressive” Parties and Politicians

I define a progressive executive as any mayor holding the endorsement of the Socialist or Communist parties, but not that of the LDP. This leaves out purely centrist candidates, but there were so few of these during this period that it scarcely affects the statistics on the total number non-LDP-party endorsed candidates during these years. I explain my exclusion of centrist candidates in greater detail below.

I do not include purely centrist mayors in the lists of progressive mayors. There were very few purely centrist mayors in the late 1960s and early 1970s, therefore, scarcely affecting the total number of non-LDP mayors during those years. However, purely centrist mayors increased substantially in the 1980s (Richardson 1997: Table 4.2, p. 87), as they developed closer ties to the LDP. I therefore exclude them from the proportion of progressive mayors in

Figure 5.4 in the book because they would provide an inaccurate picture of anti-LDP strength at the local level in the 1980s.

Proportion of Seats Held by the Non-LDP Parties (Mean for All Prefectures)



Compiled from information in the Japan Statistical Yearbook (various years)

Each observation represents the mean for all prefectures in a given year.