

Appendix 6a – Things cut for space reasons from Chapter 6

Other “Quality” Professions?

A case could be made for including a number of other backgrounds in the definition of a Quality candidate. I explain here why I exclude them from my measure. First, because of the traditionally strong mobilization skills of unions, a good case could be made for including union members. That said, with the decline in union strength and membership, union members had much less advantage by the end of the 1990s (and in fact very few LDP or DPJ new candidates were union members). Second, prefectural assembly members, mayors, and governors are hardly the only local politicians in Japan; many others hold office in city and town assemblies. I exclude them though, because, while such politicians often have substantial political experience, the limited geographical space of their districts typically offers them only a relatively small, pre-existing organized base of support. Not surprising, therefore, all new candidates in the data set who were coded primarily as union or municipal assembly members lost in their SMD races in 2000. Third, a case could also be made for including lawyers, business men and women, newspaper journalists, and professors. Indeed, including lawyers and members of business is particularly compelling given that these people’s background indicates a level of talent that makes them especially good candidates in other countries such as the U.S. However, I exclude them, first and foremost, because such professions do not develop what is particularly critical in Japanese politics: a well developed and organized base of support. In addition, such individuals lack the public service experience that helps make bureaucrats more attractive and the widespread name recognition that helps TV newscasters.

It might be argued that the parties might do better by running more “outsiders” such as members of the business community (the Japanese Berlusconi?). Among LDP and DPJ new candidates in 2000, 30 were former local office holders and 24 were from the business community. (There also were 7 lawyers and nearly no candidates from the other “outsider” professions discussed above.) It should be reiterated, though, that there is good reason for parties not to focus on such outsider campaigns in Japan, where the importance of the organized vote—in large part an outgrowth of draconian campaign laws and especially the clientelist system—makes it critical to find candidates who have such mobilizable and organized bases of support. Not surprising, therefore, when I re-ran the probit model reported in Table 5.5 but included the above professions in the disaggregated model, none of the added backgrounds turned up statistically significant (although, if anything, there were improved significance levels for the remaining Quality variables). In short, such career backgrounds had no discernible effect on a candidate’s chances of success.¹

Candidate Recruitment and Candidate Background Literature

For more on candidate recruitment and the background of candidates in different countries, see Best and Cotta (2000).

Jacobson’s analysis of the success of quality candidates is sensitive to the fact that experienced contestants will be more likely to run when they have a good chance of winning.

¹ In addition, out of concern that the variable representing TV newscasters might be too ad hoc, I ran one final model that included only Local, Bureaucrat, HC, and Inherit as quality candidate variables. In this model, the results scarcely changed for those reported in Table 5.5.

However, the experienced candidate does better than the inexperienced one even when these other factors are controlled for.

Analysis of Japan

“Given its lack of strength at the local level, the NFP could achieve fairly substantial popularity but still have great difficulty seriously challenging the LDP.” Moreover, assembly members elected for the first time in April 1995 could hardly be considered experienced candidates (although they probably could be called quality candidates) in time for the July 1995 HC election. In short, in terms of its ability to find experienced contestants for the 1995 HC election, the NFP was even weaker than these numbers suggest.

Other Information

No former prefectural governors were new candidates for the DPJ or LDP in 2000.

Predicted Probabilities

I also find that the probability of a new Quality candidate (as opposed to one who was specifically a former local office holder) winning office was just over 32 percent.