Pergamon

Electoral Studies 18 (1999) 179–198

Electoral Studies

Urban outfitters: city-based strategies and success in post-war Japanese politics

E. Scheiner

Department of Political Science, Duke University, Department of Political Science, 214 Perkins Library, Durham, NC 27708, USA

Abstract

Scholars have long held that the urban–rural cleavage has been a critical line of division in Japan. In contrast, recent applications of rational choice to Japan have emphasized political structures over sociological factors. Kohno (1997) utilizes electoral data to indicate the importance of institutional factors, and largely rejects the centrality of the urban–rural distinction in shaping party strategy and success. The article presented here offers evidence that demonstrates not only that Kohno's model is misspecified, but also that an approach founded on the urban–rural split tends to offer greater explanatory power than the purely institutional model.

Analysis of the past two decades has indicated that competition centered around issues and candidate-appeals have increasingly structured party systems in advanced democracies (Dalton, 1996; Dalton et al., 1984; Flanagan, 1980; Flanagan et al., 1991; Franklin et al., 1992). Nevertheless, societal cleavage models remain important in explaining party systems. Japan has been at least as prone as other advanced industrial countries to the rise of candidate-based sources of party competition, but, there is considerable anecdotal and statistical evidence demonstrating an urban–rural cleavage underlying much of the conflict within Japanese politics (Campbell, 1993; Flanagan, 1980; Flanagan et al., 1991; Jiji Tsushinsha, 1981; MacDougall, 1980; Masumi, 1995; Reed, 1997; Richardson, 1997; Stockwin, 1989).

Scholars have long held that there is a fairly stable set of differences in party support between urban and rural voters in Japan, whereby, especially compared to urbanites, rural voters are consistently and more strongly supportive of conservative

0261-3794/99/$ - see front matter
PII: S0261-3794(98)00009-2

politicians (Flanagan et al., 1991). Rural voters have tended to be cleanly tied into social networks that help create a bond between them and (often conservative) local politicians. At the same time, the relative lack of such networks in the cities has brought about the increase in 'floating voters', who are not similarly bound to conservative politicians and are more likely to support the small, usually-moderate opposition parties who better represent their urban lifestyle (Flanagan, 1980; Richardson, 1977, Richardson, 1997; Stockwin, 1989).

In contrast, recent applications of rational choice to Japan have emphasized political structures over sociological factors. In his provocative analysis of post-war Japanese party politics, Kohno (1997) utilizes electoral data to indicate the importance of institutional factors, and largely rejects the centrality of the urban–rural distinction in shaping party strategy and success.

In this article, I present evidence that demonstrates not only that Kohno's model is misspecified, but also that an approach founded on the urban–rural split tends to offer greater explanatory power than the purely institutional model. The analysis here demonstrates the societal basis for many of the changes that have occurred in the Japanese party system over the past four decades and even provides evidence that the cleavage between city and countryside may have been an important element leading to the 1993 split of Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP).

Japanese post-war political history

In 1955, the Liberal and Democratic parties in Japan joined together to form the (conservative) Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), while the Right and Left Socialist parties united to create the Japanese Socialist Party (JSP). As the two parties immediately came to hold nearly all the seats in Japan's parliament (Diet), it was widely assumed that Japan was embarking on a two-party democratic system (Masumi, 1995). Yet, almost immediately, this two-party system began to splinter. In 1960, moderate elements within the JSP, citing irreconcilable differences with the party's leftist leadership, abandoned the party to form the Democratic Socialist Party (DSP). In 1967, a Buddhist lay organization, Soka Gakkai, began running candidates in lower house elections through its political wing, *Komeito*, or the Clean Government Party (CGP). In 1976, a group of young LDP politicians seeking increased power and a reduction in the political corruption of the system, bolted from the LDP to form the New Liberal Club (NLC) (Hrebenar, 1992).[1]

Throughout this period the LDP saw its vote share decrease significantly from a high of 57.8% in 1958 to a low of 41.8% in 1976 (Curtis, 1988), but managed, nevertheless, to maintain its grip on the government. The party appeared to blossom in the 1980s as its vote and seat share made up some lost ground. Yet, in 1993, LDP defectors helped pass a vote of no confidence in the LDP government and

[1] However, after fair initial success, the NLC never gained much support and was absorbed back into the LDP after the 1986 election.

Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa, and new elections were called. Renegade LDP Diet-members formed new parties, Shinseito and Sakigake, while an altogether new party of former LDP upper house members and new candidates joined to form the Japan New Party (JNP).[2] After the 1993 election a new government was formed, composed of the former opposition parties and the three new parties, marking the first non-LDP government since the party was formed in 1955.[3]

Kohno's rational choice argument

As Kohno (1997, chap. 1), in a useful typology, explains, three primary approaches have been utilized to analyze Japanese party politics over the post-war period. One, the political-cultural approach, emphasizes the unique Japanese culture as a determinant of Japanese political behavior. A second, the historical approach, emphasizes the legacies of the past as being particularly critical in shaping political behavior. The third, the socio-ideological approach, based in large measure on Lipset and Rokkan's (1967) theory of cleavages within society, focuses on the divisions between citizens and, in turn, the politicians who represent them. Kohno rejects all three, citing, especially, their weakness in providing *a priori* predictions about likely political behavior. Instead, he offers a rational choice, 'microanalytic' approach to explain political action. In particular, he emphasizes the Japanese Single Non-Transferable Vote (SNTV) with medium-sized district electoral system as the primary determinant of party and candidate behavior in Japan.[4]

Under SNTV each voter is allotted one vote for a candidate. The top vote-getting candidates (up to the number of seats available in the district) are each then awarded a seat. Throughout most of the post-war period, the system has been primarily made up of three-, four- and five-seat districts. Providing empirical evidence, Kohno argues that the decision of new parties to run candidates was largely dependent upon the size of the electoral district. That is, larger districts offer a way for candidates to get elected with a relatively small vote percentage. For example, the maximum needed to be elected in a five-seat district is 16.67% of the vote. As a result, rational small new parties will target large districts and Kohno's evidence to support such patterns is largely statistically significant. Kohno concludes:

[2] There is an interesting similarity between the birth of the centrist parties in the 1960s and those created in 1993. In each case, a wholly new party—the CGP in 1967 and JNP in 1993—emerged, while around the same time, others—the DSP out of the JSP in 1960 and Shinseito and Sakigake from the LDP in 1993—grew out of a split within one of the major parties.

[3] Nevertheless, in 1994, the LDP returned to power in a coalition government and, in late 1997, regained its seat majority.

[4] SNTV was eliminated in the electoral reform legislation of 1994. Japan now has a 'two-tiered' electoral system that utilizes both single-member districts and proportional representation blocks. For discussions of the incentives offered by this new system, see Christensen (1996a), McKean and Scheiner (1998), and Reed (1995).

> If, as Duverger would argue, the electoral system provides disincentives for rational politicians and rational voters to remain members or support members of underrepresented political parties, one would expect that the small parties would be less likely to run their candidates in three-member districts and more likely to run them in five-member districts. Evidence from the cases of the DSP, CGP, and NLC all yield results supporting this hypothesis. (Kohno, 1997, p. 128)

Yet, there is a key problem in Kohno's analysis here in that he does not fully spell out how (or even if) the socio-ideological approach attempts to link voters and parties. For this reason, despite his thoughtful critique of alternative approaches, Kohno misses what ought to be the crucial issue in a methodological individualist exploration. By considering how the socio-ideological approach might hypothesize such voter-party links, Kohno might have made his own analysis more robust. Instead, he focuses almost solely on district magnitude as a determinant of party strategy and success. Although other variables were critically important in parties' determinations to run in specific districts, Kohno never controls for them.

As relatively large parties, the LDP and JSP have consistently run candidates in nearly every district. In contrast, smaller parties have had to make important strategic decisions over where their candidates should be nominated. In the following section, I provide evidence that demonstrates that district magnitude does not always play a significant role in helping shape new and small party strategy in Japan. Contrary to Kohno's claims, new, centrist party strategy has consistently been shaped by the parties' recognition of the differences between voters in different sections of the country.

A socio-ideological approach to party strategy: empirical evidence

The DSP and CGP

Under SNTV, the decision of new parties in Japan to run candidates was based in large measure on their recognition of where the voter base would be most fertile for their message. Over time, a centrist block has grown up in the cities, with fewer concrete ties to the JSP and a greater willingness to vote for new, more moderate parties. The DSP and CGP have no doubt also been able to attract more voters in cities where it is harder to maintain *koenkai* (voter support groups) that are so prevalent and successful in rural districts. The moderate DSP and CGP recognized the centrist nature of a large portion of the urban electorate and geared their electoral appeals accordingly, emphasizing the cities in their nomination strategies.[5] By analyzing party strategy in Japan in a way that controls for the influence of both district

[5] At the same time, it is important to note that opposition voting in urban areas may be less a function of strong loyalty for these parties, and due more to the increased proportion of floating voters (Flanagan, 1980).

type and district magnitude (as well as other important variables when relevant), I am able to demonstrate that district magnitude has not consistently played as significant a part in the nomination strategies of centrist parties in Japan. This does not suggest that the small, centrist parties are in some way 'non-rational'. Rather, the type of district—whether city or non-city—has typically played a more critical role than district magnitude in determining strategy for such parties.[6]

The Democratic Socialist Party

Differences in the Japan Socialist Party (JSP) support-base go back to its days as two parties, the Right and Left Socialists. For example, in 1954, the Left Socialists received 16.6% of the vote in the less urban counties, towns and villages (which are mutually exclusive), where the Right Socialists won only 11.5%. In contrast, the Right Socialists won 22.6% of Japan's largest cities and 15.2% in smaller ones, where the Left Socialists received 15.6% and 11.8% respectively (Masumi, 1995, p. 364). This divide no doubt continued into the 1960s as city Socialist voters were more likely than countryside voters to support moderate candidates.[7]

After splitting from the JSP, the Democratic Socialist Party (DSP) immediately sought to become a large party, running a candidate in nearly every district in 1960, its first election as a new party. However, there is a small pattern to the strategy the DSP pursued. While the party certainly ran a candidate in most five-seat districts (36 out of 38, or 94.7%), it also ran a candidate in every single metropolitan district. Moreover, breaking down districts to city (urban and metropolitan) and non-city (mixed and rural), the DSP ran a larger proportion in cities (51 candidates out of 54 districts or 94.4%) than in the non-cities (52 candidates out of 63 districts or 82.5%).[8]

Kohno points out the incentives offered by the larger districts to small parties, noting that nearly half of all DSP winners (eight out of 17) were in five-seat districts. However, by focusing solely on district magnitude, he misses the importance of the *type* of district. DSP candidates were more successful in cities (12 out of 51 or 23.5% of all candidates) than in non-cities (five out of 52 or 9.6%). In fact, nearly half the DSP winners (eight out of 17 or 47%) came from metropolitan districts.

To better parse out the effects of these different variables I ran a probit on DSP candidate success in 1960. The dependent variable is whether the DSP won a seat (coded 0 or 1) in a given district. I created a dummy variable for type of district, measured 1 for city (urban or metropolitan) and 0 for non-city (mixed or rural). I created a dummy variable for each size of district.[9] I also created dummy variables to indicate whether the DSP was running an incumbent or returnee (i.e. someone who was previously an incumbent but was not a member of the Diet in the term leading up to the election), and/or a candidate who was either the top loser (e.g. the

[6] It is important to note that there is no correlation between type of district (city or countryside) and district magnitude. There are three-, four- and five-seat districts in both urban and rural areas.

[7] Despite this fact, the DSP's base has been consistently weaker than that of the JSP.

[8] Unless otherwise noted, all data is derived from Reed (1992).

[9] A value of 0 for both the 'three' and 'four' dummy variables indicates that the district has five seats.

fifth place finisher in a four-seat district) or within 10 000 votes of receiving a seat in the last election.[10]

Given the centrist, less strongly party-affiliated electorate in more urban areas, new parties will be more likely to win in cities. They also will be more likely to win where they have previously successful candidates running. Therefore, each of these variables ought to be statistically significant with a positive sign. Controlling for these variables, we should not automatically expect district magnitude to be statistically significant. The results are listed in Table 1. Every DSP candidate who had been a top loser in 1958, won a seat in 1960. As expected, the city and

Table 1
Probit analysis of DSP success and candidacies

	Win (1960)	Cands (1963)
Number of obs.	85	78
chi2(4)	55.99	14.50
Prob > chi2	0	0.006
Pseudo R2	0.658	0.163
Log likelihood	− 14.537	− 37.152
	Coefficient (standard error)	Coefficient (standard error)
constant	− 2.932*** (0.790)	− 0.872** (0.333)
city	1.429* (0.617)	0.988** (0.335)
three	− 0.669 (0.636)	− 0.634 (0.412)
four	− 0.214 (0.662)	− 0.166 (0.411)
Incumbent	3.077*** (0.670)	[b]
top loser	[a]	0.452 (0.420)

[a]Every DSP candidate (32 total) who was a top 'loser' or within 10,000 votes of last place seat winner in 1958 won in 1960.
[b]Every district (39 total) that had DSP incumbents, returnees, or long-time candidates (candidates who had been running in the district for a number of elections without any victories) in 1960 ran a candidate in 1963.
* Significant at the 0.05 level.
** Significant at the 0.01 level.
*** Significant at the 0.001 level.
All tables exclude one one-seat district.
Unless otherwise indicated, the source for all tables is Reed (1992).

[10] The use of 10 000 votes is an arbitrary figure, but a fairly useful one as many top 'losers' are not even that close to getting a seat.

incumbent/returnee variables were statistically significant and positive. In short, the DSP tended to win a seat when it ran in urban and metropolitan districts and where it ran incumbents and returnees. Counter to the predictions of the purely institutional model, district magnitude played no statistically significant part in determining DSP success. This lends great support to the socio-ideological approach's view that cleavages within society are helping shape party success and undermines Kohno's claim that 'institutional' factors play a critical role. Candidates won where the party's strongest base of support should have been.

The DSP did not do as well as it had hoped in 1960, winning only 17 seats. For this reason, it cut down on the number of candidates it ran in 1963. Still focusing on district magnitude as the explanatory variable, Kohno argues that the DSP concentrated on large districts in 1963, as the party ran a candidate in 65.8% (25/38) of all five-seat districts, but only 30% (12/40) of districts with three seats. Again, I suggest that once other variables are taken into account, district magnitude provides less explanatory power: In particular, the DSP put greater weight in cities (running in 40 out of 54 districts or 74.1%) than in non-cities (running in only 19 out of 63 districts or 30.2%).

We should expect the city variable to be significant and positive in 1963: the DSP is no longer seeking to run a candidate in every district, but rather hopes to find an optimal nomination strategy. We should expect all the other variables (except those representing district magnitude) to be significant and positive.[11]

As Table 1 shows, the city variable is positive and significant for 1963. No doubt having learned a lesson from its failure in the countryside in 1960, the DSP chose to focus its nominations on urban and metropolitan areas. The presence of incumbents, returnees, and candidates who had been running in the district for a number of elections always led to the DSP nominating a candidate. Interestingly, the top losers variable is not significant. To speculate, it is likely that the DSP did not feel that every top loser from 1960 was going to be a viable candidate in 1963.

The key point to draw from this analysis is that DSP nomination patterns and DSP success are not primarily due to the institutional constraint (district magnitude). Rather, they are partly a function of the previous success of its candidates and partly a function of the type of districts and, no doubt, the type of voters within them. The DSP was addressing an apparent preference of a sizable chunk of city voters to be able to vote for a centrist party.

The Clean Government Party

Kohno's model holds up far better in the case of the 1960s' Clean Government Party (CGP), but, by not controlling for other variables, the purely institutional approach misses the significance of sociological factors. As noted above, the CGP

[11] Here I measure previous success by examining whether the DSP (not necessarily the candidate running in 1963) was successful in 1960. My reasoning is that if the DSP candidate did well in 1960, but chose (or was forced by illness or death) not to run in 1963, the party will recognize the niche it has found and will seek to take advantage of it, even without the candidate who may have created it.

entered the lower house electoral fray in 1967. Kohno points out that the party ran a candidate in 42.5% (17/40) of five-seat districts, but only 11.6% (5/43) of three-seat and 25.6% (10/39) four-seat ones. At the same time, the CGP also immediately began pursuing an even more city-oriented strategy than the DSP had, running a candidate in 45.8% (27/59) of all city districts (and 24 out of 29 or 82.8% of metropolitan ones) and only 7.9% (5/63) of all others. This should not be surprising. The CGP has consistently made appeals to an even more urban constituency than DSP (Hrebenar, 1992; MacDougall, 1980). Table 2 offers probit analysis results, demonstrating that once again, the relationship between cities and new centrist party activity is statistically significant and positive. Unlike the DSP, which split off from the JSP, the CGP was a new party with all new candidates, and therefore faced no incumbency or previous success variable to consider at the national Diet level. The four-member district variable remains non-significant, but the three-member district one is statistically significant. CGP candidates clearly sought to avoid the smallest districts. Unlike the DSP seven years earlier, the CGP was being particularly careful in its nomination strategies in its trial run.

I also examine CGP success in 1967. Again, there is a strong bias toward cities (22 of the 25 winners were in cities), but also a poor record for the CGP in three-seat districts (only five three-seat district winners, as opposed to 13 winners in five-

Table 2
Probit analysis of CGP candidacies and success

	Cands (1967)	Win (1967)	Cands (1969)
Number of obs.	117	117	90
chi2(4)	35.56	26.36	38.48
Prob > chi2	0	0	0
Pseudo R2	0.276	0.239	0.309
Log likelihood	− 46.605	− 41.884	− 43.122
	Coefficient (standard error)	Coefficient (standard error)	Coefficient (standard error)
constant	− 0.964***	− 1.239***	0.112
	(0.291)	(0.325)	(0.334)
city	1.221***	1.266***	1.175***
	(0.331)	(0.367)	(0.341)
three	− 1.476***	− 1.190**	− 1.553***
	(0.442)	(0.447)	(0.433)
four	− 0.566	− 0.604	− 0.321
	(0.331)	(0.354)	(0.409)
DSP Incumbent	0.233	0.010	1.235**
	(0.346)	(0.368)	(0.483)

In every district (32) in which the CGP ran a candidate in 1967, it again ran one in 1969.
* Significant at the 0.05 level.
** Significant at the 0.01 level.
*** Significant at the 0.001 level.

seat districts). In the probits I included a dummy variable that noted the presence of a DSP incumbent. Originally I hypothesized that DSP incumbents would scare off potential CGP challengers. Yet, as Table 2 shows, there is no statistically discernible relationship between DSP incumbency and CGP strategy or success. To speculate, the presence of a DSP incumbent might affect the CGP in two different ways. It may sometimes scare off challengers, but, at other times, it attracts challengers who might associate the presence of DSP incumbents with an urban, centrist constituency that would be likely to support the CGP.[12]

The CGP dramatically increased the number of candidates it ran, from 32 in 1967, to 76 in 1969. Again, the CGP nominated the largest number of its candidates in cities (51 candidates out of 59 city districts as opposed to 25 candidates in 63 non-city districts). Kohno argues that district size is a key determinant in party nomination patterns, citing the party's decision to run a candidate in only 34.9% (15/43) of three-seat districts, but 85% (34/60) of five-seat districts. As with the previous cases I have examined here, probit analysis (Table 2) indicates that the centrist parties will be more inclined to run candidates in cities. At the same time, as in 1967, the CGP largely avoided three-seat districts. In addition, two interesting results are very worth noting here. First, in every district in which it ran a candidate in 1967, the CGP ran one again in 1969. Second, there is a statistically significant, positive relationship between the presence of a DSP incumbent and the choice by the CGP to nominate a candidate. Centrist voters who support the DSP are quite different than the Soka Gakkai members (who are in large measure centrists) who support the CGP. The statistically significant DSP-incumbent variable therefore suggests that the same traits that give rise to centrist voters looking for centrist parties also gives rise to a sizable Soka Gakkai membership, and, therefore, support for the CGP. That is, it is probably not the presence of a DSP incumbent *per se* that attracts the CGP, but, more likely, characteristics of the district itself may attract centrist parties.

Table 3 and Table 4 give a greater sense of what the probit results in Table 2 means in terms of CGP nomination strategy. The results here partly support Kohno's hypothesis that district magnitude is a prime shaper of party influence. For example,

Table 3
Probability of nominating a candidate: effect of district magnitude and type of district on CGP nomination strategy (1967)

	3-seat district	5-seat district	Difference
City	0.122	0.511	0.389
Non-city	0.008	0.108	0.1
Difference	0.114	0.403	—

Holding DSP incumbency constant at its mean.

[12] It is also possible that the CGP calculated that the addition of an extra (in this case, DSP) candidate reduced the proportion of the vote needed to win a seat, thereby offering the CGP a greater incentive to run a candidate.

Table 4
Probability of nominating a candidate: effect of district magnitude and type of district on CGP nomination strategy (1969)

	3-seat district	5-seat district	Difference
City	0.395	0.901	0.506
Non-city	0.075	0.544	0.469
Difference	0.32	0.357	—

Holding DSP incumbency constant at its mean.

Table 3 shows that, while holding the DSP incumbent variable constant at its mean, by moving from a city district with only three seats to a city district with five seats, the CGP's probability of running a candidate there in 1967 increased from approximately 12% to greater than 50%. As Table 4 indicates, the CGP in 1969 had a 39.5% chance of running a candidate in three-seat city districts, but a 90% chance if the city district had five seats. At the same time, though, Table 3 indicates that in 1967, the CGP went from a 10.8% probability of running a candidate in a five-seat non-city district to greater than 50% in the same size city district. Similarly, in 1969, the CGP went from a 54.4% chance of running a candidate in a five-seat, non-city district to a 90.1% chance in the five-seat city district. In short, there is considerable evidence that the district type (city or non-city) makes a sizable difference in the nomination patterns of the CGP. This is particularly significant in that it lends continued support to the socio-ideological approach. These tables also indicate that some sort of learning appears to be occurring. Between 1967 and 1969, the CGP has grown increasingly likely to run candidates in cities and in five-seat districts.

The New Liberal Club

Kohno argues that the New Liberal Club (NLC) also fits into the pattern of deriving nomination strategy from district magnitude, pointing to the fact that the NLC ran a candidate in 31.7% (13/41) of all five-seat districts and only 14.9% (7/47) of those with three seats. However, Kohno's results are non-significant. At least as important, without breaking the data down into smaller sub-categories, we cannot be certain that district magnitude played a critical role for the NLC in influencing party candidacy. As with the DSP and CGP, the NLC focused its nomination strategies on cities (running in 16 out of 66 city districts as opposed to eight out 63 non-city districts), but as probit analysis in Table 5[13] shows, once other variables are brought into the equation, the city variable turns up non-significant. Not surprisingly, the NLC tends to run candidates who are incumbents, returnees, or have simply been running in a district (despite meeting with little success for a number of years).

[13] Using the *Asahi Shimbun*, Kohno finds 25 NLC candidates. Using Reed (1992), I find 24. However, I also find three NLC-affiliated independents (whom I do not include in my analysis), one of whom may be Kohno's 25th candidate.

Table 5
Probit analysis of NLC candidacies (1976)

Number of obs.	129
chi2(5)	36.25
Prob > chi2	0
Pseudo R2	0.293
Log likelihood	− 43.851
	Coefficient (standard error)
constant	0.367
	(0.553)
city	− 0.151
	(0.375)
three	− 0.985**
	(0.391)
four	− 0.695
	(0.367)
incumbent	2.214***
	(0.564)
LDP incumbent	− 1.970**
	(0.794)

* Significant at the 0.05 level.
** Significant at the 0.01 level.
*** Significant at the 0.001 level.

Also not surprising, the NLC was less likely to run a candidate when there was a high proportion of LDP incumbents running in the district. The logic here is clear: the NLC is directly competing with the LDP for votes. This highlights an important reason why there appears to be no strong relationship between type of district (e.g. city) and NLC candidacy. The NLC was not primarily a centrist party, but rather one that was established to compete with the LDP as a second conservative party (Hrebenar, 1992). In Kohno's analysis, district magnitude was non-significant, thereby slightly undermining his own argument. Yet, once additional variables are added (as in Table 5), the three-seat district dummy variable becomes statistically significant and the four-seat district variable nearly so at the 0.05 level.

In short, my analysis here ultimately supports Kohno's argument about the NLC to some degree, but also indicates a shortcoming in his analysis: In places, Kohno's intuition appears to have been largely correct, but by leaving his model underspecified, he is unable to draw a wholly accurate picture of the significance of key variables. By misspecifying his model, Kohno reports conclusions that are substantially off-base:

> [T]he historical context in which each of those three small parties, the DSP, CGP and NLC, was created, differed considerably and consequently, the social backgrounds of the supporters of each party varied from labor union members to

> Buddhists to neo-Conservatives. That the results were statistically significant and remarkably consistent across the three cases, *despite such variations*, illustrates the generalizability of the theoretical claim expressed in the form of the hypothesis. In other words, individual politicians and voters are individual decision makers, and they act rationally and strategically beyond specific historical and social contexts. (Kohno, 1997, p. 132—emphasis in original)

Far from being statistically significant across all three cases, the DSP, CGP and NLC did vary in their nomination strategies and electoral support. The DSP and CGP faced slightly different contexts and their early nomination strategies reflect these differences. As a neo-conservative party, the NLC pursued a significantly different strategy from the two centrist ones. In short, context mattered!

Other cases

DSP and CGP Cooperation and Competition

In the 1970s, the DSP and CGP occasionally cooperated in certain districts, running only one candidate between them under a joint DSP and CGP heading.[14] Kohno suggests that district magnitude played a role in their decisions over which districts in which to cooperate. Cooperation will be more likely to occur in small, three-seat districts where, at best, only one small party would be able to win a seat and where splitting the centrist vote could lead to both parties losing. I tested this theory by means of probit analysis for the 1979 election in which DSP-CGP cooperation was at its peak. Included in my model was the city dummy variable, dummy variables for district magnitude, a dummy variable that indicates whether both parties had run and lost in the district in the previous election, and whether both parties had incumbents in the district in 1979. As Table 6 shows, only the variable indicating that both parties had run and lost in the previous election is significant. Type of district, district magnitude, and the presence of two incumbents were statistically non-significant. On the whole, the decision to cooperate by the DSP and CGP appears to be driven more by idiosyncrasies of individual districts than by a method based purely on district magnitude.

Just as it is generally easier to explain defection than cooperation, it is also easier to provide an explanation of when the CGP and DSP will compete with one another.[15] Kohno again attributes competition to district magnitude, which in part makes sense; larger districts would provide more room for two small parties to compete. Yet, numerous other variables also play a part. With urban and metropolitan voters being more likely to support centrist parties, the CGP and DSP are likely to

[14] For a more complete discussion of opposition party cooperation, see Christensen (1996b).

[15] Competition and cooperation are, of course, not the only options here. In many circumstances, only one party might choose to run a candidate (even without the cooperation of the other party), and in other cases, neither party might decide to nominate a candidate.

Table 6
Probit analysis of cooperation/competition between DSP and CGP

	Cooperation (1979)	Competition (1979)
Number of obs.	129	129
chi2(5)	12.05	77.77
Prob > chi2	0.034	0
Pseudo R2	0.085	0.516
Log likelihood	− 65.111	− 36.522
	Coefficient (standard error)	Coefficient (standard error)
constant	− 0.771**	2.347**
	(0.289)	(0.808)
city	0.072	0.879*
	(0.261)	(0.416)
three	0.089	− 1.732***
	(0.328)	(0.488)
four	0.043	− 0.847*
	(0.335)	(0.390)
both lost in 76	1.590*	NA
	(0.678)	
both incumbents	− 0.921	NA
	(0.529)	
JSP	NA	− 2.861*
		(1.379)
LDP	NA	
		− 3.998***
		(1.117)
1976 Candidate	NA	− 0.868*
		(0.379)

NA = Not applicable.
* Significant at the 0.05 level.
** Significant at the 0.01 level.
*** Significant at the 0.001 level.

compete in cities. If there was an insufficiently large number of centrist voters in a district, the parties would be likely to 'over-split' the centrist vote: there might be enough centrist voters to elect one centrist candidate, but two candidates would divide the vote and leave no centrist winner. However, cities will tend to have a larger pool of centrist voters, thereby increasing the number of centrist candidates with a chance to get elected. Therefore, we should expect to see greater competition between the DSP and CGP in cities.

Competition will be less likely when there is a high proportion of seats held in the district by the JSP and LDP. Where the JSP and LDP control a large number of seats, any party, regardless of ideology, will face difficulty in making headway in the district. This difficulty will likely be magnified for centrist parties in districts where the JSP and LDP tend to control the seats: voters supporting these two parties

will tend to be further from the center on the ideological spectrum. Finally, competition will tend to be less likely in districts where only one of the DSP and CGP ran in the previous election. Once they have become well established, parties tend to have already determined where they can be successful. By 1979 both the CGP and DSP had no doubt determined where their resources might be best spent. If a party did not run a candidate in a given district in 1976, it would be unlikely to do so in 1979. Probit analysis (Table 6) confirms Kohno's argument about the importance of institutional factors (district magnitude) in shaping party strategy. At the same time, the statistical significance of the city variable once again provides support for the socio-ideological approach: the centrist parties need worry less about oversplitting the vote in the cities.

The Japan Communist Party

The Japan Communist Party's (JCP) base of support has also traditionally been in cities, but Kohno again suggests that JCP success, particularly in 1979, when it won its largest number of seats in decades, is most likely to occur in large districts where small parties have a greater opportunity for success:[16] the party won seats in 19 five-seat districts, 11 four-seat districts, and 9 three-seat districts. However, the purely district magnitude model misses the fact that of these 39 seats won, 31 were in the cities (22 in metropolitan districts). Moreover, as Table 7 shows, once we control for type of district, district magnitude is non-significant.

The Japan New Party

The case of the Japan New Party (JNP) in 1993 is particularly important. The JNP played a critical part in the decline of the LDP that ultimately led to the ruling party's split and loss of governmental office. If the JNP was merely behaving in accord with incentives provided by the electoral system, this leaves analysts somewhat in the dark as to why the LDP split in 1993. However, if societal factors played a role in JNP nomination strategy and electoral success, we may find in these factors clues to the reasons for the LDP's decline. Kohno argues that district magnitude played a substantial role in shaping JNP nomination strategy and success, as the JNP ran candidates in 50% (23/46) of all five-seat districts and won in 73.9% (17/23) of those in which it ran. In contrast, it ran a candidate in only 25.6% (10/39) of all three-seat districts and won in half (5/10) of those in which it ran. Yet, again, by controlling for other variables, it is clear that district magnitude did not play as significant a role as the purely institutional model suggests: the JNP ran a candidate in 65.2% (43/66) of all city districts, as opposed to 22.2% (14/63) of all non-city districts, and won 30 out of its 35 seats in cities (Asahi Shimbun, July 19, 1993).

[16] Although its base of support is relatively limited, the JCP tends to run a candidate in nearly every district.

Table 7
Probit analysis of JCP success (1979)

Number of obs.	129
chi2(3)	22.72
Prob > chi2	0
Pseudo R2	0.144
Log likelihood	− 67.695
	Coefficient (standard error)
constant	− 0.850***
	(0.261)
city	1.067***
	(0.258)
three	− 0.583
	(0.301)
four	− 0.306
	(0.303)

* Significant at the 0.05 level.
** Significant at the 0.01 level.
*** Significant at the 0.001 level.

Probit results listed in Table 8[17] indicate the limited effect of district magnitude on JNP candidate nomination and success, showing conclusively that the JNP both concentrated and succeeded primarily in city districts.[18]

Discussion

To most starkly illustrate how sharply my findings diverge from those of the district magnitude approach, let me note the heart of Kohno's argument:

> [I]f the electoral districting were such that larger districts were concentrated in urban areas, the evidence presented here might not be particularly revealing. If this had been the case, the above set of results could be interpreted as support for the socio-ideological argument that the rise of centrist forces reflected the new political agenda of urban voters. The grouping of the three different sizes of electoral districts, however, did not coincide with the urban/rural distinction or with

[17] Utilizing the *Asahi Shimbun* from July 5, 1993, the day the campaign began, Kohno finds 55 JNP candidates. From the July 19, 1993 *Asahi Shimbun*, immediately after the election, I find 57 JNP candidates. Also, Kohno does not include a specific candidate (whom he does not identify) who won a seat, but was not an official JNP candidate at the beginning of the campaign period. I include this candidate and therefore find 35 JNP winners while Kohno finds only 34.

[18] A value of zero for the 'two', 'three', 'five' and 'six' dummy variables indicates that the district has four seats.

Table 8
Probit analysis of JNP candidacies and success (1993)

	Candidates (1993)	Winners (1993)
Number of obs.	127	119
chi2(4)	28.99	22.34
Prob > chi2	0	0
Pseudo R2	0.167	0.159
Log likelihood	− 72.392	− 59.086
	Coefficient (standard error)	Coefficient (standard error)
constant	− 0.359	− 1.294***
	(0.265)	(0.315)
city	1.021***	1.139***
	(0.249)	(0.290)
two	− 0.940	[a]
	(0.618)	
three	− 0.671*	− 0.306
	(0.323)	(0.359)
five	− 0.295	0.174
	(0.297)	(0.311)
six	[b]	[b]

[a]The JNP lost in the only two-seat district in which it ran a candidate.
[b]The JNP nominated a candidate and won in both six-member districts.
* Significant at the 0.05 level.
** Significant at the 0.01 level.
*** Significant at the 0.001 level.
Source: *Asahi Shimbun* (July 19, 1993).

> industrial demographics.... Given this, the above results point to the independence, as well as validity, of the microanalytic interpretation that the revival of the Japanese multiparty system was driven by the electoral system under which rational voters and politicians had to operate (Kohno, 1997, p. 130).

In other words, Kohno is arguing that because there is no correlation between district magnitude and district type (urban or rural), we cannot claim that there is an urban–rural basis underlying party decision-making and success. Kohno's point about this lack of correlation is an important and all too frequently ignored one. Yet, with the exception of the NLC, Japanese parties examined here *did* weight their strategies toward and found their greatest success in the cities. By not controlling for other variables, the district magnitude approach misses this important fact. The electoral system did at times appear to play a role in shaping party strategy and success. But, once we control for the urban–rural distinction, the purely institution-based model's argument, that district magnitude was the primary influence, generally ceases to hold water and we find significant support for the socio-ideological argument.

A number of ideas in this article merit further consideration. First, the nomination strategies of the small parties in Japan are quite different from one another. Among other things, the center parties pursue quite different strategies from the neo-conservative one. The variations in their base of support help explain their strategic behavior. District magnitude, as an explanatory variable, is not usually statistically significant. Proponents of Kohno's analysis might respond that a model based on district magnitude has the advantage of parsimony. Yet, there are two answers to such a claim. The first is an incorrect parsimonious model is certainly no better than a non-parsimonious, but correct one. The second answer is that I provide a model that is at least as parsimonious as the micro-analytical one. The urban–rural distinction helps define party strategy! In short, the analysis here offers new evidence to support what has traditionally been held as an important truth of Japanese politics: the urban–rural cleavage is an important element shaping Japanese politics.

Second, my analysis does indicate three important situations in which electoral institutions provide a partial explanation for party strategy and success.

1. *The CGP*. As MacDougall (1980) notes, the CGP tends to run candidates only when it is fairly certain of winning. As I noted earlier, only a very small proportion of the vote is necessary to win a seat in five-seat districts. Given its superior organization, the CGP is assured of an extremely high turnout at the polls by its supporters. Therefore, the CGP can channel even a relatively small base of support into a Diet seat victory in large districts.
2. *The NLC*. As a neo-conservative party, the NLC was not necessarily an urban-based party. As a very small party, it was typically unlikely to get a large vote share, thereby leading it to larger districts where it could win with a smaller percent of the vote. At least as important, however, the NLC tended to run fewer candidates as the proportion of seats held by the LDP in the district went up. Given that the LDP controlled seats in nearly every district, the NLC probably chose to pursue large districts where the presence of one or two LDP incumbents would still be only a relatively small proportion of all the seats available.
3. *DSP/CGP Competition*. As I noted above, for the most part only large districts have a sufficiently large number of seats for two centrist parties to be able to compete effectively for seats.

Third, we can also draw an important point about electoral system theory from the analysis here. It is generally assumed that the larger the district magnitude, the more small parties will be aided, and that rational parties will seek out these larger districts. However, the Japanese case demonstrates two potential limitations to this 'law'. (i) The district magnitude must be greater than five for a party to base its strategy solely on district size. The evidence here demonstrates that small parties do not automatically choose the larger districts when their largest option has only five seats. (ii) Other factors besides district magnitude play a critical role in party strategy and party success.

Fourth, for the most part my findings confirm the traditional view of the urban–rural distinction in Japan. At the same time, my results also seem to diverge from a few accounts as well. Richardson et al. (1991) argue that as the pace of urbanization

and geographical and occupational mobility has slowed since the mid-1970s, the environment has become 'uncongenial' for new, small, splinter parties. However, my analysis of the JNP demonstrates that opportunities available to such opposition parties continue to be present in Japan today.

My evidence here appears to run counter to Reed's (1997) analysis of the NLC and new party booms. Where Reed finds particularly strong urban support for the NLC in 1976 and rural support for the new parties in 1993, I find no clear urban support for the NLC, but an urban base for the JNP in 1993. The divergent analyses, though, are due to the fact that we focus on different dependent variables: I examine party nomination strategy and seat success, while Reed looks at the votes received as a proportion of district electorate.[19] He finds that urban voters were more likely to reward NLC candidates in 1976 and my analysis supports his claim that the party may have hindered its own ability to take advantage of this boom, by choosing not to emphasize a city nomination strategy.

There is a different reason for the divergence of our results relating to the new party boom in 1993. Whereas Reed looks at all new parties in 1993, I examine only the JNP. As I noted earlier, while the other new parties were to a large degree made up of dissatisfied LDP incumbents, the JNP was much more of a truly new party. The fact that new party candidates did particularly well in rural districts may be partly a testament to the strong base they, as incumbent candidates, already held there, as well as the attractiveness of their putting forth a new party label. I see three potential reasons for why JNP did not take advantage of this rural boom: The first being that the JNP simply missed a golden opportunity. Secondly, the rural boom was also a boom for new party incumbents and, as it was made up of new lower house candidates, the JNP was unable to exploit it for its own purposes.

The third, and most provocative, the JNP did, in fact, have a different message with greater urban appeal than the other new parties. The behavior and success of the JNP in 1993 is very telling. As it was the first wholly new party created at the time, the JNP is frequently seen as particularly crucial to understanding the events surrounding the realignment of Japanese politics in 1993. The fact that the party's base is heavily rooted in Japanese cities may in fact be illustration of a significant divide between cities and the countryside, one that played a very important role in the realignment of the party system and a weakening of the LDP.

Finally, this article presents evidence that confirms the existence of an urban–rural type cleavage in Japan, but what is this cleavage about? Is it ideological in the traditional sense? Is it evidence of a new middle mass in Japan (Murakami, 1984)? Is it evidence of differences between urban and rural value systems in Japan? (See, among numerous other sources, Flanagan et al., 1991.) Is it due to voters who are tired of the corruption in politics, who, on the basis on living in the cities, are not part of a *koenkai* that will tie them to a party and who do not reap the benefits of the public works projects brought to the less urban areas? Is it an indication of a

[19] Stockwin (1989), considering data from 1983, also uses vote percentages to demonstrate the urban foundation of NLC support.

factor cleavage between rural land and urban labor or capital (Rogowski, 1989)? Or, is it due to a new cleavage that cuts across the old industrial lines? That is, it might be some sort of division between internationally competitive and non-competitive sectors of the economy that is brought on by increased globalization of trade and capital (Frieden, 1991; Frieden and Rogowski, 1996; Inoguchi, 1993; Pempel, 1997; Rosenbluth, 1996; Rudd, 1995). Irrespective of the foundation underlying this divide, it is a problem critically worth researching, as it may be at the core of the Japanese party realignment.

Acknowledgements

The author thanks Laura Berger, Mark Berger, E. Crate Herbert and Ian Miller for techinical support, Andrew Mingo Baker and John Brehm for econometric suggestions, and Melanie Hurley, Betsey Scheiner, Irv Scheiner, Scott Seaman and Rob Weiner for helpful comments on earlier drafts of the manuscript. Very special thanks to Meg McKean and two anoymous reviewers whose suggestions substantially improved the manuscript, and Melanie Hurley whose econometric assistance was indispensible to the completion of the analysis.

References

Asahi Shimbun. Lower House Election Coverage. July 19, 1993.

Campbell, J. C. (1993) The Old-Fashioned Way: How the LDP Stayed in Power. (Unpublished manuscript).

Christensen, R.V., 1996a. The new Japanese election system. Pacific Affairs 69, 49–70.

Christensen, R.V., 1996b. Strategic imperatives of Japan's SNTV electoral system and the cooperative innovations of the former opposition parties. Comparative Political Studies 29, 312–334.

Curtis, G. (1988) *The Japanese Way of Politics*. Columbia University Press, New York.

Dalton, R. J. (1996) *Citizen Politics: Public Opinion and Political Parties in Advanced Western Democracies*. Chatham House Publishers, Inc., Chatham, NJ.

Dalton, R. J., Flanagan, S. and Beck, P. eds (1984) *Electoral Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies*. Princeton University Press, Princeton.

Flanagan, S. (1980) National and local voting trends: cross-level linkages and correlates of change. In *Political Opposition and Local Politics in Japan*, ed. Kurt Steiner, Ellis S. Krauss and Scott C. Flanagan. Princeton University Press, Princeton.

Flanagan, S., Kohei, S., Miyake, I., Richardson, B. and Watanuki, J. eds (1991) *The Japanese Voter*. Yale University Press, New Haven.

Franklin, M. N., Mackie, T., Valen, H. *et al*. (1992) *Electoral Change: Responses to Evolving Social and Attitudinal Structures in Western Countries*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Frieden, J. (1991) *Debt, Development and Democracy: Modern Political Economy and Latin American, 1965–1985*. Princeton University Press, Princeton.

Frieden, J. and Rogowski, R. (1996) The impact of the international economy on national policies: an analytical overview. In *Internationalization and Domestic Politics*, ed. R. Keohane and H. Milner. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Hrebenar, R. J. (1992) *The Japanese Party System*. Westview Press, Boulder.

Inoguchi, T., 1993. Japanese politics in transition. Government and Opposition 28, 443–455.

Jiji Tsushinsha, ed. (1981) *Sengo nihon no seito to naikaku* (The political parties and cabinets of postwar Japan). Jiji Tsushinsha, Tokyo.

Kohno, M. (1997) *Japan's Postwar Party Politics*. Princeton University Press, Princeton.

Lipset, S. M. and Rokkan, S. (1967) Cleavage structures, party systems and voter alignments. In *Party Systems and Voter Alignments*, ed. Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan. The Free Press, New York.

MacDougall, T. E. (1980) Political opposition and big city elections in Japan, 1947-1975. In *Political Opposition and Local Politics in Japan*, ed. Kurt Steiner, Ellis S. Krauss and Scott C. Flanagan. Princeton University Press, Princeton.

Masumi, J. (1995) *Contemporary Politics in Japan*. University of California Press, Berkeley.

McKean, M. and Scheiner, E. (1998) "Japan's New Electoral System: La Plus ça change...." (manuscript).

Murakami, Y. (1984) *Shin Chukan Taishu no Jidai* (The age of New Middle Mass). Chuo Koron-sha, Tokyo.

Pempel, T.J., 1997. Regime shift: Japanese politics in a changing world economy. Journal of Japanese Studies 23, 333–361.

Reed, S. (1992) *Japan Election Data*. Center for Japanese Studies, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Reed, S., 1995. The nomination process for Japan's next general election: waiting for Heiritsu-sei. Asian Survey 35, 1075–1086.

Reed, S. (1997) A Story of three booms: from the New Liberal Club to the Hosokawa coalition government. In *Japanese Politics Today: Beyond Karaoke Democracy*, ed. Purnendra Jain and Takashi Inoguchi. Macmillan Education Australia Pty Ltd., S. Melbourne.

Richardson, B., 1977. Stability and change in Japanese voting behavior, 1958–1972. The Journal of Asian Studies 36, 675–693.

Richardson, B. (1997) *Japanese Democracy: Power, Coordination, and Performance*. Yale University Press, New Haven.

Richardson, B., with Flanagan, S., Watanuki, J., Miyake, I. and Kohei, S. (1991) The Japanese voter: comparing the explanatory variables in electoral decisions. In *The Japanese Voter*, ed. Scott Flanagan, *et al*. Yale University Press, New Haven.

Rogowski, R. (1989) *Commerce and Coalitions*. Princeton University Press, Princeton.

Rosenbluth, F. M. (1996) Internationalization and electoral politics in Japan. In *Internationalization and Domestic Politics*, ed. Robert Keohane and Helen Milner. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Rudd, C., 1995. Changes to the Japanese political system: "An end to 1955 and all that"? Political Science 47, 97–128.

Stockwin, J. A. A. (1989) Political parties and political opposition. In *Democracy in Japan*, ed. Takeshi Ishida and Ellis S. Krauss. Pittsburgh University Press, Pittsburgh.