

**ASIA TODAY**



# JAPANESE AND RUSSIAN POLITICS

**Polar Opposites or  
Something in Common?**



**Edited by  
Takashi Inoguchi**



## 2.1

### Politics of Swings\*

*Takashi Inoguchi*

Yoshihiko Noda won the party leadership election of the incumbent Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) in September 2011, half a year after the great East Japan earthquake and the ensuing tsunami and nuclear power plant disaster of March 11, 2011.<sup>1</sup> Noda became the third DPJ primeminister of Japan. He has survived longer as a prime minister than his five predecessors, Shinzō Abe, Yasuo Fukuda, Tarō Asō, Yukio Hatoyama, and Naoto Kan. But one common quality marks these six prime ministers, Liberal Democrat or Democrat, as their popularity rankings share a similar evolution: initial popularity usually registers between 50 to 60 percent and then falls at a steady rate of about five percent per month until about the one-year point when the popularity of each leader reaches its nadir of 10 to 15 per cent—at this time another prime minister enters as if through an automatic revolving door.<sup>2</sup> It is said that Noda has survived slightly longer in part because of his success in legislating a tax hike. As of October 2012, his popularity ratings hover around 20–25 percent. But the trend looks the same. Sooner or later another prime minister will make his entrance. Rather than trying to give some explanations of this phenomenon here, let me try first to summarize what happened to Japanese politics as it evolved in 2012. After that, I will provide some general evaluations.<sup>3</sup>

#### How Yoshihiko Noda Became the Third DPJ Prime Minister

Noda won a party leadership election in August 2011 after the “three founding fathers” of the Democratic Party each disappeared as their

weaknesses were exposed: Ichirō Ozawa was indicted for his alleged money irregularities; Yukio Hatoyama for his inept handling on *Futenma*, a US air field on Okinawa, and his East Asian community idea; and Naoto Kan for his inept leadership in handling the great natural and nuclear disasters of 2011. Ozawa's puppet candidate, Banri Kaieda, failed in the leadership election and Noda won in a swift formation of an anti-Ozawa coalition in the second round of the leadership election. Noda was quick to gain the full support of two key bureaucratic agencies, Treasury and Foreign Affairs, agencies that dearly wanted to have the ear of the prime minister during hard times. The DPJ's election campaign in 2009, which brought it an overwhelming victory, contained two slogans—"Citizens' Livelihood First" and "Politics Take Command" (not bureaucratic agencies).<sup>4</sup> Hard times is used in two senses: both the debacle of the Lehman Brothers of 2008 and the great disasters of 2011 (earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear) aggravated the government's financial positions, which worsened with the DPJ's election promise and subsequent inept handling of social policy budgets. To add salt to the wound, Hatoyama's failure to get support from the United States government exposed Japan to its neighbors' "onslaughts," that is, activating territorial issues on three islands claimed by several regional states, northern islands (southern *Kuriles*), *Takeshima (Dokto)*, and *Senkaku Islands (Diaoyu Islands)*.<sup>5</sup>

## Noda's Four Missions: Recovery, Government Deficits, Social Policy, and Alliance

Noda's first priority was recovery from the 2011 disasters. Noda was aware of the need for speed in garbage and debris collection from the disasters but was slowed by opposition coming from the selected places for disposal. A more fundamental issue, human resettlement, had to be expedited from those disaster-stricken areas to new but temporary barracks that would lead hopefully to the eventual establishment of permanent homes, either at the original or new address. Interagency adjustments take an enormous amount of time, months or even a year or more; to hear "go ahead" is music to those waiting. To get the economy to move ahead, infrastructure has to be consolidated. Most of those indispensable items such as water, sewage, electricity, gasoline, roads, bridges, railways, airports, telephone communication, TV, radio, newspapers, and post were returned to

normal. One item that requires long, intermediate, and immediate planning and/or action is the 40-odd nuclear power plants scattered across the Japanese archipelago. The debates continued about how to tame a Prometheus unbound, whether to put an end to it, how to generate electricity without relying on nuclear power generation, how power generation can be efficiency achieved without nuclear power generation, how power generation can be achieved without unnecessary emission of carbon dioxide, how putting an end to nuclear power generation can alter international power configuration, etc. Public opinion is divided as to whether nuclear power generation should be ended and how many years is necessary to prepare for a society powered by nonnuclear sources without causing a perennial power shortage for industrial and daily household consumption. Immediately after the disaster of Fukushima No. 1 power plant, the WIN-Gallup International polls conducted throughout some 50-odd countries<sup>6</sup> and reveal that Japanese public opinion is divided but leaning toward “facing it with calmness”<sup>7</sup> across income, occupation, and educational categories. Yet a continuous eruption of antinuclear demonstrations of notable size and vigor took place, such as the public protests that numbered in the thousands and focused on the building of the Prime Minister’s office throughout much of August 2012. The agitators apparently sensed from the government responses to the government-, National Diet-, and nonprofit-organization (NPO)-sponsored assessment reports that the government was not really intent on abolishing nuclear power plants once and for all, no matter how difficult it might be and however long it might take to do so. Such protestors include antinuclear ecologists and antinuclear pacifists who are fairly widespread. What is sensed as the government’s procrastination and inability to make an authoritative decision promptly and effectively has been a significant factor in the steady decline of popularity ratings. *Kimerarenai seiji* (politics that cannot make an authoritative decision) has become one of the phrases used to characterize Japanese politics.<sup>8</sup>

To be fair to the Japanese government and people, recovery is fast by international standards. Aside from Fukushima No. 1 power plant, recovery of those negatively affected areas of Japan’s Northeast compares very favorably to other areas devastated by natural disasters, including New Orleans posthurricane Katrina and 2008 Sichuan postearthquake.

The second priority is government deficits. For the last 40 years, the Ministry of Finance or Treasury has nudged every prime minister

to either introduce consumption tax or to legislate an increase (say from 3 to 8 and then to 10 percent, as Noda's tax hike accomplished). Noda was clever and skillful in legislating the hike despite all the adversities confronting him. Noboru Takeshita (r.1987–1989) legislated consumption tax legislation successfully but with the ultimate self-sacrifice, that is, resignation from the position of prime minister. Most prime ministers, starting from Masayoshi Ohira (r. 1978–1980), had to face at least a significant reduction in popularity immediately after hinting even casually or merely raising the possibility of tax legislation. Prime Minister Ohira even passed away from a heart attack while campaigning during an election to introduce consumption tax in 1980. Noda's popularity ratings went up a little bit when he legislated a consumption tax hike bill in August 2012. But soon they were on a steady decline as if automatic. With regard to government deficits, citizens have consistently rejected a tax hike for the last 40 years. The consequence is that the government has had to issue an astronomical amount of government bonds over time. Government bonds are purchased largely through banks and other financial institutions that normally hold a large amount of citizens' savings in bank accounts. Government bonds are largely backed by domestic savings, and thus, according to many economists, do not necessarily cause a Greek-like state bankruptcy. Yet the government budget looks odd in a sense.<sup>9</sup> First, the government pays a huge amount of interests to banks and financial institutions on a rate that may not be "reasonable" when ordinary savings accounts yield 0 percent interest. Government bond servicing costs ¥22 trillion annually, which represents about 25 percent of the government budget. No less significant is the local transfer of money to local government, amounting to ¥16.6 trillion, about 18 percent of the annual budget. Local governments handle the grassroot-level of administration of such areas as social policy, hospitals, education, police, land conservation, transportation, and internal communication. For the remaining 54 percent or so of the budget, it goes to numerous central government tasks, such as foreign affairs, finance, internal affairs, health and labor, education and science, justice, treasury, agriculture, forestry and fishery, the economy, industry and trade, the environment, defense, internal security, state strategy, Okinawa and Northern Territories, antidisaster preparations, gender equality, demographic decline, local government sovereignty, consumer protection and food safety, nuclear power plant administration, space policy, economic and fiscal policy, science and technology policy, new public goods, and administrative innovation.

Social security accounts for ¥26 trillion, about 28 percent of the budget. The long-term strategy of the Ministry of Treasury is twofold: (1) to use consumption tax hikes to achieve a balance between revenue and expenditure rather than having to issue a large amount of government bonds for this objective; and (2) to direct a certain percentage of consumption tax to local governments, subsequently reducing the central government's transfer to them.

The third priority is social policy or the social entitlement promise made in the 2009 general election that caused a massive and dramatic sway in the electorate decision.<sup>10</sup> At the time the economic recession, sparked by the Lehman Brothers in 2008, created a receptive atmosphere for prioritizing the public first with the slogan of "Citizens' Livelihood First," especially when the then incumbent Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) prime ministers held power without being tested by voters. Thus the first DPJ prime minister Hatoyama's popularity ratings went sky high, reaching 70 to 80 percent. Then voter support swung away as quickly as it had swung in his support. Although some anti-DPJ people have labeled the DPJ a liar on its social entitlement promise, the party, especially Prime Minister Noda, has been trying to ensure that the government keeps its promise whenever government revenue is available. If the government raises revenue high enough to sustain the minimum of social entitlement that the DPJ promised in the 2009 general election via consumption tax hike legislation now passed in the National Diet, the cooperative legislation of that bill by the House of Councilors would be gratefully appreciated. The government party does not enjoy a parliamentary majority in the House of Councilors. The support of the LDP and the *Komei* Party would be necessary when Prime Minister Noda tables the bill to explicitly tie the two policies of tax hike and social entitlement together. The problem is that the LDP is adamantly against Prime Minister Noda's "nonpromise" of calling for a general election "in the near future (*chikaiuchini*)" as of August 2012 and thus threatens to table a nonconfidence motion once the National Diet resumes in the fall. Such a position by the LDP causes Prime Minister Noda to postpone the resumption of the National Diet for as long as possible. Popular ratings as of early October are in the range of 20 to 25 percent for the cabinet headed by Prime Minister Noda. The consumption tax hike to 10 percent will not enhance government revenue significantly, even if it is to be implemented in 2015. Thus, the argument to tie the two policies together looks superficial although it represents, at least, a sincere argument in that direction. Meanwhile, knowing that

the popularity rating of the DPJ has been eroding so steadily that DPJ parliamentarians, especially in the House of Representatives, appear to be departing from the DPJ one by one, and sometimes by the bunch. As of October 8, 2012, the DPJ's parliamentary majority is tenuous: if five more DPJ members of the House of Representatives leave then that majority status will be lost, and legislative efforts may become much more hazardous to Prime Minister Noda.

The fourth priority is alliance. Sick of US unilateralism in response to the alleged Islamic fundamentalists' terrorism in the 2000s and the current US pivot strategy of rebalancing and refocusing in response to the alleged aggressive rise of China in the 2010s, the alleged "anti-American" wing of the DPJ, headed by Yukio Hatoyama and Ichirō Ozawa, tried to shift Japan's policy direction toward Japan distancing itself somewhat from the United States and enhancing ties with China in 2009–2010. Opposition at both home and abroad blocked the attempt.<sup>11</sup> This is in part to the DPJ's slogan, "Politics Take Command." Bureaucrats were disgusted by the slogan and spirit of making a decision without briefing and discussing matters with bureaucrats, especially those in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on alliance. Moreover, Ozawa's visit to China that facilitated every DPJ parliamentary member to shake hands with Vice President Xi Jinping in Beijing combined with Hatoyama's call for an East Asian community formation without the United States raised instantaneous suspicion on the part of the US government. Also, Hatoyama's speech to the Okinawan people that he wanted to relocate the *Futenma* air base outside Okinawa prefecture, preferably to other prefectures or even to non-Japanese territory, could not be realized, with the result that that the people of Okinawa felt deeply alienated from, and furiously angry with, the government. The consequences of their actions are the indictment of Ozawa for the alleged misuse of money and his resignation from the leadership of the DPJ (he was the DPJ leader immediately before the general election of 2009) and Hatoyama's resignation from the position of prime minister. Prime Minister Kan stuck to the proalliance policy line, knowing that two of the DPJ troika had fallen in part because of the alliance. The maritime dispute with China, surrounding the *Senkaku* Islands (*Diaoyu* Islands) in autumn 2010, led Kan to develop the policy line that was to be amplified by Prime Minister Noda. On March 11, 2011, the triple disasters (earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear) took place. The US Armed Forces, led by aircraft carrier *Ronald Reagan*, were heading toward the western Pacific to prepare for a possible nuclear test by North Korea but instead redirected their

mission toward the disaster-affected areas of Japan. The US armed forces promptly reached these areas and carried out a very effective rescue operations there. It was called Operation *Tomodachi* (friends). The Japanese citizens enthusiastically welcomed US help. Trust in the United States among Japanese soared to heights not known for many years. Stressing the alliance with the United States, Kan upgraded the security consultative committee (Japan-US two by two, foreign and defense ministers of both countries sitting together) in June 2011, and at the end of 2011, Noda selected the F-35 as the next generation fighter aircraft over some competitors, citing its superior ability of air penetration with stealth capability. Also, Kan and Noda stressed the East Asia Summit meaning ASEAN plus Japan, Korea, and China plus India, Australia, and New Zealand, making no mention of the East Asian community that Ozawa and Hatoyama had promoted. Japanese politicians debated Japan's entry into the Trans-Pacific Partnership but as of October 2012, it appears that Japan's participation would be delayed, possibly marred by domestic differences.

Relations with Japan's neighbors have deteriorated recently. After the maritime dispute with China in autumn 2010, Noda declared the nationalization of *Senkaku* Islands only two days after Hu Jintao met and conveyed to Noda the Chinese red line that the *Senkaku* Islands (*Diaoyu* Islands) should not be nationalized. Apparently, Hu was infuriated that Noda had not informed him of the imminent action of nationalization, and in response the Chinese leadership decided to mobilize anti-Japanese protestors on a massive scale throughout China. Sentiments also ran high as many Chinese believe *Senkaku* Islands (*Diaoyu* Islands) were stolen by the Japanese. Most events planned for the fortieth anniversary of the Japan-China diplomatic normalization in 1972 were cancelled. Chinese protestors attacked many Japanese stores and factories. Relations with South Korea also worsened. President Lee Myung-bak flew to *Takeshima* (*Dokdo*) Islands in August 2012. President Lee noted to journalists that he has been urged to take action in response to the constitutional court's verdict in spring 2012 that Korean victims could sue for restitution. President Lee is criticized for not taking any action to redress the human rights records in wartime Korea (alluding to comfort women). The Japanese government insensitively kept insisting that all war-related issues had been resolved, once and for all, by the Basic Treaty between Japan and South Korea in 1965. The Trilateral Cooperation Dialogue among Japan, China, and South Korea was held in Tokyo in May 2011. The three leaders visited the disaster-affected region



together. The dialogue was not held in spring 2012. Instead, Noda “talked” to Lee and Hu separately, outside the sessions of the Asia Pacific Economic Conference, at Vladivostok in September. It was not even a conversation.

## Japanese Politics in an Era of Globalization

Viewed from afar, what does Japanese politics in 2012 look like macroscopically? Three features stand out. First, interactions between civil society across borders have become salient.<sup>12</sup> Japanese civil society was very much roused by territorial issues. Puzzled somewhat about why the territorial disputes came to the forefront and about why the Japanese government did not appear to be well prepared to meet challenges coming from not only neighboring governments but also from neighboring civil societies, segments of Japanese civil society reacted self-defensively to these challenges by becoming more patriotic. The surge in patriotism that echoes the government’s rigid stance on *Senkaku* Islands, *Takeshima*, and northern islands was noteworthy. At the same time, Japanese civil society lamented what they regarded as the weak and unpreparedness of their country. But segments of citizens, no less large, seem to take the issues calmly. Most noteworthy in relation to Japanese politics is that some segments of Japanese civil society pay attention to what neighboring civil societies do remarkably well. Examples seen in China and Korea include Cui Weiping, a female novelist in China, who led a Internet joint appeal of Chinese intellectuals entitled, “Restore reason in China-Japan relations.”<sup>13</sup> Supporters of the appeal strongly opposed the Japanese government’s nationalization of the *Senkaku* Islands, but they also took issue with: 1) political groups who promoted self-interest using nationalism and instead asked the government to be responsible and show reason in leading Chinese citizens; 2) the use of violence in anti-Japanese demonstrations, which do not represent most Chinese citizens; and 3) publication bans on Japan-related books. Similar moves in South Korea are also reported in Japan. To what extent various actions in Chinese and South Korean civil societies impact Japanese civil society is not precisely known. But the fact remains that they are reported by widely read daily newspapers and monthly magazines as well as through the Internet. Authoritative government voices appear to have reduced their influence of the past whether they are in Japan, South Korea, or China. Vast numbers of literate citizens and Internet users act across national borders, both in terms of inflaming emotions and

calming them. One tends to forget that nationally confined citizens have a say in national politics. This fact is outdated. Earlier in 2012, Gallup International conducted polls in 50-odd countries on the US presidential election<sup>14</sup>. It is not surprising that on average 80 percent of respondents in North Asia, meaning China, Japan, South Korea, and Hong Kong, affirmatively replied to the question of whether the US presidential election impacts their country. It is a small surprise to know that as many as 49 percent of respondents of North Asia replied affirmatively to the question: Do you agree or disagree with the proposition that citizens of your country have the right to vote in American presidential election! If legitimate and legislated nationally and internationally, North Asia's segment of the United States of NANA (North Asia-North America) would be decisively for Obama!<sup>15</sup>

Second, As the tide of globalization deepens, intermediate organizations in nationally organized societies decrease in number and in terms of vigor. By intermediate organizations I mean those organization whose role is primarily to represent and/or mediate various interests of society between the state and citizens. Here interest groups, political parties, bureaucracy, the military, the parliament, nongovernmental organizations, etc. are all included. Take political party. Paul Whiteley has dramatized the shrinking activities of political parties by rhetorically asking, "Is the Party Over?"<sup>16</sup> The figures he has assembled are not confined to Britain but also include the whole world. Political parties in Japan have been predominantly parties of parliamentarians, not of grassroot-level members. If you look at the prerequisites of candidates running for the election of party president within a political party, whether it is the DPJ or the LDP, the two major parties of Japan, a certain number of parliamentarians of your party is the only requirement to make you a candidate. In the September 2012, party representative election of the governing DPJ or the party presidential election of the LDP, one quality is crystal clear: The total valid votes of the LDP were 491,205 whereas the total party votes of the DPJ were 326,974(15). Membership number reduction is almost ubiquitous across intermediate organizations. Three conjectures are possible here. First, some intermediate organizations including political parties have now the option of being subsidized by the state (in Japan by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication). Second, nongovernmental organizations are monitored by the state once the organization is registered as a tax-free organization. Third, citizens can now voice freely their preferences

and sentiments independent of parliamentarians as people's deputies. They all participate across borders. Gallup International's poll results are a good testimony to this development.

Third, citizens are busier, say in comparison to 30 or 50 years ago. Work has become more organized and systematically monitored. Work has become more globalized. Without upgrading continually skills and teamwork, one cannot expect to increase his/her wages and improve other entitlements. This means work is associated with stress of many kinds. The Internet, smartphones, and other devices facilitate communication and collaboration. Intermediate organizations do matter, but to a lesser degree. Citizens armed with the Internet, that is, netizens, have been on a steady increase in North Asia, more so in China and South Korea than in Japan in the 2000s. In the 2010s, Japan appears to have also caught up with an increase of netizens. The emergence of regionally specific initiatives, such as the *Ishin-no-kai* (Osaka-focused Restoration Society) or Nagoya-focused *Genzei Nihon* (Japan for Tax Reduction), have a lot to do with the development of netizens who are happy to be alone but are also happy to be virtually connected with other people with such devices. You are alone, but at the same time you are pleased to be connected to others through tweeting.<sup>17</sup> Once conditions are met, it appears easier for Japanese society to be dominated by netizens than by more class-based or tribal-based or ruthlessly meritocratic societies. Class-based societies, portrayed by Stein Rokkan and Martin Seymore Lipset, capture European societies; tribal-based societies speak to Afghan society; and ruthlessly meritocratic societies reflect China and the United States, although differently.<sup>18</sup> Japanese society does not easily permit elitism: business and political elites must look like ordinary people. Dokou Toshio, the fourth president of Keidanren (r.1974–1980), Japan business federation, is known not only for his poor peasant family heritage but for his habit of having a very frugal breakfast that consisted of a bowl of rice, a bean cake soup, horseradish pickles, and a small sautéed salted sardine. People listened to him in part because he was from the same ordinary stock as others. Bureaucratic elites in Japan have one distinguishing quality from their counterparts in many other societies. Only a small number of Japanese bureaucrats hold a higher academic degree like MBA and PhD. When the Internet flourishes in society, many cleavages like class, religion, ethnicity, wealth, and merit tend to be blurred or, as in the words of Thomas Friedman, flattened.<sup>19</sup> Japanese society is even more easily flattened under globalization. So many citizens lean to one side as sentiments

swing en masse in that direction. So do so many citizens swing away overnight as sympathies recede.

Will Japanese politics continue to repeat this theme of swinging and swinging away soon after? Not quite. Witness tens of thousands of activists who protested, again and again, using smartphones and other electronic devices, amidst the intolerable heat and humidity of summer 2012, against Prime Minister Noda's decision to start up those nuclear reactors again that had been shut down since the disasters of March 11, 2011. The magnitude of demonstrators reached an unprecedented level, one that had not been seen during the last half century. In May 1960, protest erupted over legislated revisions of the Japan-US treaty, and protestors assembled in large numbers around the National Diet and surrounding areas. The impact was substantial<sup>20</sup>. Nobusuke Kishi, the then prime minister, immediately resigned from office. But its scale was no match to those protestors who gathered against the resumption of the nuclear power plants. Newspaper and TV coverage of those protestors and antinuclear power plants were visibly underreported. Prime Minister Noda granted a meeting to the representatives of the protestors once in the Prime Minister's office. The thought that Prime Minister Kishi, half a century before, had resigned from office after being confronted by protestors surrounding the National Diet, probably never entered Noda's mind. Prime Minister Noda has not resigned from office. Yet the popular ratings keep falling. And those departing parliamentarians from the DPJ have not stopped.

Not only antinuclear protestors but also anti-US protestors against US military bases have been strong. Two US marines sexually assaulted girls in Okinawa in 1995. This triggered the Japanese government's decision to start negotiations with the US government to relocate the US Marine Air Field from *Futenma*, located in the midst of a congested city, to *Henoko* on the coast, where demographic conditions are regarded more lightly. Both the Japanese and US governments headed by Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto and President Bill Clinton, respectively, signed agreement in 1996 to replace the US Marine Corps, a core of the US Marines in East Asia. Since 1996, protests against US military bases have been persistent, albeit at a reduced level. In 2005, US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld wanted to confirm whatever progress might have been made on this matter en route to Seoul for discussions on North Korean issues. To his great dismay and surprise, he found that although ten years had elapsed since the joint communique nothing had happened on the relocation matter.

In the immediate post-Cold War years, Japanese politics was preoccupied with itself. The LDP gradually disintegrated and lost power briefly in 1993–1994. In 1995 when the marines' sexual assault of girls took place, the Japanese Socialist Party and the LDP cohabited government. Since 1995 the LDP came back fully in 1998 without the Socialists as a coalition partner. But under the LDP, Japanese politics was kept uneasy and unstable for the succeeding decade. Junichiro Koizumi's tenure (2001–2006) provided a temporary boost to its popularity. On October 16, 2012, another marines sexually assaulted another woman. This event took place in the midst of anti-US protests against deployment of Ospreys, a long-range transport helicopter-cum-aircraft. Again, newspaper and TV underreported the degree of anti-US protests.

## Conclusion

In tandem with the demonstrators protesting against the start up of the damaged nuclear power plants and US military bases, it seems fairly safe to note that voter swings (and swing-aways) and frequent leadership turnovers will continue to occur. Giuseppe di Palma published in 1977 a book on the Italian political system entitled, *Surviving without Governing*.<sup>21</sup> The successive governments formed by the LDP and the DPJ, at a pace of one prime minister a year since 2006, may be assessed by critics in a similar fashion. Perhaps it would be harsh to use the title of the book to characterize Japanese politics for 2006–2012. Nevertheless, swings and swing-aways in voter support are likely to continue for a while.

The penetration of borderless forces, the reduction of intermediate organizations, and the degeneration of bureaucratic elitism and meritocracy in Japanese society seem to be enhancing the pronounced features of Japanese politics in the 2010s, especially in the year of 2012. Hence, voters swing, and swing away soon. Prime Minister Noda was acting adroitly despite all the adversities the DPJ face in 2012. Noda did not succeed in running against semi-automatic structural forces working against the longevity of one person as prime minister. On December 16, 2012, Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda faced the general election, which he himself called for, after having weighed between the steadily increasing number of DPJ parliamentarians and the pressure of public opinion that he was prolonging general election unduly against his promise to Shinzō Abe in late August that he would call for general election in a not-so-distant future. The die was

cast. The outcome was a disastrous defeat for the DPJ and an overwhelming victory for the LDP by default. The DPJ got 57 seats (compared to 233 prior to the general election) while the LDP got 294 seats (compared to 118 prior to the general election). The paradox is that while participation rates (59.32 percent for the scheme of one winner taking all from one district and 59.21 percent for the scheme of proportional representation) were the lowest since 1946, the first general election after World War II, the number of political parties increased next to 1946 when they mushroomed under the occupation. It is the dissonance between irresistible apathy on the electorates and indefatigable contestation among candidates. Electorates were bewildered by their choice as to whether political parties are good intermediating agents for them. To many of them, the DPJ was clearly bankrupt; the LDP looked too old-fashioned; many mushrooming smallish parties were not significantly reliable when many people stick to the dictum that known devils are better than unknown angels. Candidates were do desperate for winning seats which they believed should belong to them. LDP candidates stuck together, knowing solidarity begets benefits called political subsidies for political parties given by the Ministry of Internal Communication and Affairs. DPJ candidates, being certain about losing seats as long as their candidacy was associated with the DPJ label, left the DPJ one by one and formed new smallish parties by expedience.

On December 26, 2012, Shinzō Abe was nominated as prime minister in the National Diet and formed the cabinet. On December 28, 2012, Shinzō Abe's Cabinet's popularity poll data were published on big newspapers. They ranged 55–65 percent. Abe calls his cabinet *kiki toppa naikaku* (cabinet overcoming multiple crises). The cabinet composed of two key persons, that is, a former prime minister Tarō Asō as vice prime minister-cum-treasury minister and chief cabinet secretary Yoshihide Suga. Asō is very close to Abe both in terms of economic policy and defense policy. Suga is solidly loyal to Abe. Foreign and defense ministers, Fumio Kishida and Itsunori Onodera, respectively, are not regarded a heavy class, indicating Abe, Asō, and prime minister's key advisors will run the show. Attention should be paid to two fronts, that is, how to change a gear in macroeconomic policy regarding inflation targets and how to consolidate or mend fences in bilateral relations with the United States, China, and South Korea. Heated and delicate issues like free trade and nuclear power plant issues are assigned to two contestants at the LDP presidential election in December 2012, that is, Yoshimasa Hayashi and Nobuteru

Ishihara. Appointment of key party positions focuses on how to win the July 2013 House of Councillors election with a major power contestant of the LDP presidential election, Shigeru Ishiba, assigned secretary general of the party, who swept nonparliamentarians' votes in nonmetropolitan districts. Abe wants to stop the vicious cycle of voters swing, then swing away soon. A cabinet armed with the breakthrough weapons and strategies should be able to do so.

## Notes

\* ©2013 by The Regents of the University of California. Reprinted from *Asian Survey* 53: 1 (2013): 184–197, by permission of the Regents.

1. Ellis Krauss, "Crisis Management: LDP and DPJ Style," *Japanese Journal of Political Science* 14:2 (June 2013): 177–200.
2. Kobayashi Yoshiaki, *Seiken Kotai* (Leadership Change) (Tokyo: Chuokoronshinsha, 2012).
3. Takashi Inoguchi and Purnendra Jain, eds., *Japanese Politics Today: From Karaoke to Kabuki Democracy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Takashi Inoguchi, *Governance* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 2012); John Keane, *The Life and Death of Democracy* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2010).
4. Kobayashi, *Seiken Kotai*, 2012.
5. Kimie Hara, *Cold War Frontiers in the Asia-Pacific: Divided Territories in the San Francisco System* (London: Routledge, 2006).
6. WIN-Gallup International, "Global snap poll—tsunami in Japan and its impact on views on nuclear energy," March–April, 2011.
7. Yuichi Kubota, "Facing Crisis with Calmness? The Global Response to the Fukushima Nuclear Disaster" *Japanese Journal of Political Science* 13:3 (September 2012): 441–466.
8. "Kimerarenai seiji, no Minamoto" (The source of "Nihonkeizai shimbun" (electronic version), September 23, 2012, [http://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXNASFS21024\\_R20C12A9SHA000/](http://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXNASFS21024_R20C12A9SHA000/) (accessed September 23, 2012).
9. "Kuni no yosan doyatte tsukuruno (How to Make Government Budget?)," *Mainichi Shinbun*, October 28, 2012.
10. Takashi Horie, "Fukushi seiji to yoron" (Welfare Politics and Public Opinion), in Taro Miyamoto, ed., *Fukushi seiji* (Welfare Politics) (Kyoto: Minerva shobo, 2012), 85–110.
11. Takashi Inoguchi, "Introduction to the Special Issue: Japan-China Fragile Partnership," in *Japanese Journal of Political Science* 14:1 (March 2013): 1–7; Takashi Inoguchi and G. John Ikenberry, eds., *The Troubled Triangle: Economic and Security Concerns for the United States, Japan and China: Duality between Economy and Security* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Ukeru Magosaki, *Nihon no kokkyo mondai* (Japan's territorial issues) (Tokyo: Chikuma shobo, 2011).

12. Takashi Inoguchi, *Governance* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 2012).
13. Interview with Cui Weiping, "Reisei ni shimindoshi renkei siyou (Let Us Calmly Connect Each Other Among Citizens in China and Japan)," *Mainichi Shinbun*, October 28, 2012.
14. WIN-Gallup International, *Global Poll on American Elections: 2012*, Press Release, October 18, 2012.
15. Takashi Inoguchi and G. John Ikenberry, "Introduction," in Takashi Inoguchi and G. John Ikenberry, eds., 2013, 1–11.
16. Paul F Whiteley, "Is the Party Over? The Decline of Party Activism and Membership across the Democratic World," *Party Politics* 17 (January 2011): 21–44.
17. Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012).
18. Takashi Inoguchi and Seiji Fujii, *The Quality of Life in Asia: A Comparison of the Quality of Life in Asia* (New York: Springer, 2012).
19. Thomas Friedman, *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Globalized World in the Twenty-first Century* (New York: Farr, Straus and Giroux, 2005).
20. George Packard, *Protest in Tokyo: The Security Treaty Crisis of 1960* (New York, Greenwood Publishing Group, 1978).
21. Giuseppe Di Palma, *Surviving Without Governing: The Italian Parties in Parliament* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977).