Takashi Inoguchi

The Japanese General Election of 25 June 2000

THE TWENTIETH-FOURTH GENERAL ELECTION IN JAPAN TOOK PLACE on 25 June 2000, shortly after Yoshiro Mori had succeeded his predecessor, Keizo Obuchi, as interim prime minister. (Obuchi had died after being in a coma following a stroke.) He, in his turn, had succeeded Ryutaro Hashimoto to the prime ministership when Hashimoto had resigned after the government lost a considerable number of seats in the election for the upper house in 1998. Keizo Obuchi had managed to increase support for the government by passing two substantial sets of legislative measures to stimulate the economy in 1998 and 1999.[1]

The Liberal Democratic Party, the main governing party, had become unpopular in 1998, partly because of the government's shift in macroeconomic policy during the 1996–97 period. (The Japanese fiscal year starts in April and ends in March.) This change of course was based on the belief that Japan's economy, which had been depressed since 1991, had finally begun to recover in early 1997. Thus the government formulated massive programmes of administrative and financial reform. However, when the economy was about to pick up, this extreme tightening, both in terms of administrative personnel and financial expenditure, turned out to be too stringent. The barely recovering economy suddenly plunged again in 1997 and the depression continued through 2000.

During this emergency, Keizo Obuchi, as the newly appointed prime minister, deftly formed a parliamentary majority with the

[1] For the background of Obuchi's rise and demise, see Takashi Inoguchi, 'The Future of the Liberal Democratic Party: Obuchi's Legacy', Global Communication Platform, Tokyo, 19 April 2000 (http://www.glocom.org/). For the general trend of LDP politics, see Takashi Inoguchi, op. cit., and 'Jimin yui to kanryo shudo wa kawariuruka: zaisei lzongata no shiji kiban zukuri wa mo genkai' (Can the parliamentary dominance of the LDP and the bureaucratic leadership in public policy formation and implementation change? Clear limits to the LDP's electoral support mobilization through fiscal policy), *Sekai Shuho*, 14 March 2000, pp. 6–9.

Liberal Party and the Komei Party and swiftly passed a major stimulus package through the legislature, as well as the administrative reform package of 1998–99. He steered through another package of measures to stimulate the economy in 1999–2000. However, key indicators pointed to the still uncertain nature of the economic recovery, and Keizo Obuchi, a quintessentially cautious man, kept pumping large amounts of money into public works projects. It was shortly after passing a major piece of legislation in the National Diet, with respect to the second stimulus package, that he suffered a stroke.

A man who had to climb the ladder from the lowly position of a lower house parliamentary member from the Liberal Democratic Party (alongside Yasuhiro Nakasone and Takeo Fukuda, two former prime ministers of the same party, in the same three-member district), Keizo Obuchi retained the well-known style of district politics, even on the national stage. Namely, he continued his faithful attendance at funerals, weddings, concerts and parties, even those which were held in the evenings and at weekends. In addition to looking after economic recovery, he gave considerable attention to foreign affairs. A man who visited 37 countries in his early twenties in order to meet great statesmen and young like-minded men including Robert Kennedy, then US Attorney General, Keizo Obuchi consolidated Japan's ties with the United States and South Korea while seeking continuous engagement with China, without further apology, and with Russia without dropping territorial claims. He chose a tough policy stance vis-à-vis North Korea, for instance, when an unidentified boat suspected of espionage activities or drug trafficking was driven back to a North Korean port by the Self Defence Forces' hot pursuit and threat to sink the boat by bombing the surrounding sea. Before he suffered the stroke, the Group of Eight summit meetings in Okinawa, which he had personally planned and over which he would have presided, preoccupied him.

Shortly after Keizo Obuchi was hospitalized, a group of five people, Yoshiro Mori, Hiromu Nonaka, Secretary General of the Party, Masakuni Murakami, the LDP Upper House Leader, Shizuka Kamei and Mikio Aoki, Chief Cabinet Secretary, assembled and finally emerged from their meeting with the statement that Keizo Obuchi had indicated to Aoki that he wished Mori to be his successor. On the strength of this message as reported, although its authenticity was suspect, Aoki named Mori as interim prime minister. The first

Mori cabinet was virtually identical to Obuchi's. Mori then called for a general election on 25 June 2000, shortly before the Group of Eight summit meetings (scheduled to take place in Kyushu and Okinawa), a date which also happened to be the birthday of the former prime minister, Keizo Obuchi.

ELECTION CAMPAIGNS

The campaign was marred by the 'colourful' statements on a number of controversial subjects made by Prime Minister Mori. He has been known for his penchant for saying whatever is likely to please his immediate audience. That is not necessarily a bad thing for politicians, but somehow, his statement to an audience of the Shintoist association that Japan is a divine country made him look either totally anachronistic or disingenuous. Though he explained that what he meant was that the Japanese have an animist-like belief that everything one sees is a living god, many were left with the feeling that he might be thinking of elevating the position and status of the emperor much higher than has previously been accepted under the Constitution.[2]

In a similar vein, he reacted strongly against the statement by a Communist leader that, after the general election, the Communist Party would vote for Yukio Hatoyama, the Democratic Party leader, in the National Diet as prime minister, regardless of whether the Democratic Party would need Communist support. Mori said that the Liberal Democratic Party must protect the national essence of Japan against communists. Also shortly before election day, he made a remark (in anticipation of a surge of independent votes against the Liberal Democratic Party) that he hoped independent voters would stay at home resting, rather than bothering to go out and vote. This remark enraged many independent voters, and it might have had an adverse effect on the number of votes polled for the Liberal Democratic Party in the election.

All these colourful statements led many candidates of the Liberal

[2] For the general atmosphere and public opinion on nationalism and patriotism, see Takashi Inoguchi, 'Writing Identity and Adapting to Integration: Nationalism and Globalization in Japan', in Leo Suryadinata (ed.), *Nationalism and Globalization: East and West*, Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2000.

Democratic Party to refrain from inviting Mori to speak in the campaign. In fact, Mori's campaign mileage was as low as that of leaders of some smallish parties who did not field candidates in many districts. Most candidates of the Liberal Democratic Party chose to run their campaigns in their districts without much assistance from the Party Headquarters. Whilst this has always been a normal feature of Japanese electoral politics, it was even more accentuated this time.

The Liberal Democratic Party, in each district, is an assemblage of local notables who are more or less independent of headquarters in terms of party platforms, as soon as they get party endorsement for the district and as soon as they get publicly-financed campaign money from headquarters. Their message to the district is quint-essentially local, even more local than in the sense of Tip O'Neill's comment that 'all politics is local'. Party discipline has not been very strong at local level. But somewhat paradoxically, party disci-pline is normally very strong in voting in the legislature. The dominance of local style in the district seems to have saved the seats of many candidates of the Liberal Democratic Party through the further distance placed between party headquarters and the district. In terms of electoral cooperation between the Liberal Democratic Party on one hand and the coalition partners on the other, the Liberal Party and especially the Komei Party, both apparently suffered. The Liberal Democratic Party had to surrender a few districts to the Komei Party, to the dismay of many grassroots members of the Liberal Democratic Party. The Komei Party turned out to get only a very small number of votes from Liberal Democratic supporters. One last significant episode of the campaign was the distribution of 'red-scare' anti-Communist leaflets to many homes on the evening of 24 June, one day before election day.[3]

Aside from the provocative statements of Prime Minister Mori, the campaigns did not give much of an airing to the alternative policies of government and opposition. First, campaigns were conducted in each district, on the whole, independently of the LDP headquarters in Tokyo. Secondly, the opposition parties were not

[3] See Inoguchi Takashi, 'Kohosha no rikiryo towareru jidai' (An Age When Candidates' Competence and Appeals are Primordial), *Mainichi Shimbun*, 26 June 2000, page 10. See also Kabashima Ikuo, 'Chiho okoku to toshi no hanran' (Local 'Kingdoms' and Urban Rebellions), *Chuo Koron*, September 2000, pp. 13–143.

united among themselves. The Democratic Party was not able to convince the voters of its ability to replace the Liberal Democratic Party. Most Democratic Party candidates also ran their campaigns independently of their party headquarters. The Conservative Party, a small coalition partner, did not fight a good campaign. The Komei Party, an important coalition partner, did badly in the election. Although the Komei Party gained as many votes as in the recent past, its number of seats was reduced. The Liberal Party and the Social Democratic Party each increased its number of seats largely because the party image was projected skilfully. The Liberal Party focused on economic recovery through deregulation, while the Social Democratic Party focused on gender issues. The Communist Party, especially its Head, Tetsuzo Fuwa, and its Secretary General, Kazuo Shii, made moderate and eloquent speeches on various issues. Fuwa's statement that the Communist Party would vote for Yukio Hatoyama in the National Diet session for the selection of the prime minister (to be held immediately after the general election) might have made the Liberal Democratic Party and the Komei Party fear the possibility that Hatoyama would receive the largest number of votes, ahead of Mori, if the Communist Party voted for Hatoyama, even though Hatoyama had rejected the Communist offer of forming a coalition should such a prospect emerge.

Table
Results of the Japanese General Election, 25 June 2000

	Total Seats	District-based	PR-based	Total Seats before general election
LDP	233	177	56	271
DPJ	127	80	47	95
Komei	31	7	24	42
Liberal	22	4	18	18
Communist	20	0	20	26
Social Democratic	19	4	15	14
Conservative	7	7	0	18
Others	21	21	0	15
	480	300	180	499

RESULTS

The Liberal Democratic Party's representation was reduced from 271 seats to 233. Since the number of members in the House of Representatives had been decreased from 499 to 480 as a result of the electoral reform legislation, the loss of seats was not as great as the figure might indicate at first sight. But the party was clearly short of a majority. The LDP's coalition partners, the Komei Party and the Conservative Party, also won a substantially reduced number of seats, the former falling to 31 from 42, and the latter down to 7 from 18. Together the three parties achieved a parliamentary majority with 271 seats. The Democratic Party increased its number of seats from 95 to 127. The Liberal Party increased its seats from 18 to 22. The Communist Party's representation fell to 20 from 26. The Social Democratic Party increased its representation from 14 to 19.

Does all this amount to a victory for the Liberal Democratic Party? Yes, in the sense that it has survived as the largest party despite all its adversities. No, in the sense that it lost its clear parliamentary majority and is dependent on its coalition partners. No, also in the sense of not being able to give voters the feeling that the Liberal Democratic Party and Prime Minister Mori can revive the economy safely, leading to a fully-fledged recovery and reform of the system. The 'well-timed' release of the first quarterly (January–March 2000) economic indicators, pointing to the clear upward movement of the economy, did not help the Liberal Democratic Party very much, and Prime Minister Mori's controversial statements tended to undermine the LDP's credibility.

As regards performance in the districts, the Liberal Democratic Party fared worst in Tokyo. It also did badly in those districts containing their prefecture capital cities. The Liberal Democratic Party lost all its seats in those districts. Only in less populous and less prosperous districts was the Liberal Democratic Party able to win sufficient support. In stark contrast, the Democratic Party did well in more populous districts, with younger ambitious candidates making inroads into many LDP strongholds. The most organized parties (by Japanese standards of party organization), the Komei Party and Communist Party, did badly. It looks as if their capacity to mobilize support has declined considerably. The pre-election legislation to reduce the number of seats in the

House of Representatives, especially the number of seats subject to the proportional representation system, seems to have hurt these two parties. Although it did not come as a surprise to many, since Takako Doi, the head of the Social Democratic Party, is a woman, the SDP has increased not only the number of its seats but, what is more important, it has become the most gender-focused party by having 10 female elected members, compared to 9 male elected members. As before, those elected members with no party label amounted to 15. The prospect that many of them will join the Liberal Democratic Party soon after the general election is real. That would give the Liberal Democratic Party a clear, unambiguous majority in the National Diet without coalition partners.

The distribution of seats by LDP factions is always a good indicator of who is coming up as a candidate for next prime minister. The Obuchi faction increased its seats from 57 to 58, thus reinforcing its determination that the Obuchi faction should be able to produce the next prime minister after Mori. All other factions had a reduced number of seats. The Kato faction's seats were reduced from 51 to 43. The Mori faction's were reduced from 43 to 39. The Eto-Kamei faction fell from 42 to 31. All this factional reconfiguration seems to point to the following prospects: first, the Obuchi faction will try to find the next prime minister itself, independent of other factions; secondly, the timing of replacing Mori with someone from the Obuchi faction would depend in part on the performance of Mori and in part on the course of economic recovery from 2000 to 2001; thirdly, the most likely candidate for next prime minister seems to be former prime minister Ryutaro Hashimoto, given the shortage of relatively senior and sufficiently powerful lieutenants within the Obuchi faction.

The overall direction of policy management must be mentioned as the most salient policy issue in the general election. The expansionary line of economic policy would continue with the introduction of a huge fiscal stimulus package. The fact that the stimulus package contains so many public works projects, distributed throughout most districts without much prospect for triggering a true economic recovery, has drawn much criticism of economic policy-cum-pork-barrel, LDP-style. Partly in response to such criticism, Prime Minister Mori has therefore started to bring in a new theme: the information technology revolution should be

speeded up in order to stimulate the economy. How far this line of policy can bring about the hoped-for economic recovery remains to be seen.

Two lines of thinking which might work against swifter and more solid recovery have been in prospect: first, deeply apprehensive of the near bankruptcy of government finance, the Ministry of Finance is thinking of raising the rate of consumption tax once the economy is restored to good shape; secondly, deeply anxious about encouraging banks to lend money and activating the flow of money in Japan, which has been semi-frozen because business firms are not undertaking new investment and because individuals are not consuming very much, the Bank of Japan did raise the interest rate somewhat in August 2000. But the problem is the fear that a sluggish economy may not really move forward toward a vigorous recovery, while the consumption tax rate and interest rates continue to rise.

REFORM AND PARTY POLITICS

Let me discuss two issues that have been on the agenda throughout the 1990s. One is reform and party politics and the other is leadership and policy change.[4] Reform and party politics was a pet theme in the early and mid-1990s. The premise underlying it is that party politics needs serious efforts at reform in order for it to function more meaningfully. The political reform package enacted in 1994, shortly after Morihiro Hosokawa became prime minister, with the support of his anti-LDP coalition, followed the 1993 general election defeat of the Liberal Democratic Party.

The package was regarded as quite far-reaching in a number of ways. Political ethics was stressed. To discourage politicians from becoming vulnerable to temptations to collect money for illicit use, public money was to be allocated to political parties. Irregularities in campaigning were to be punished more severely, with any irregularity on the part of a member of the campaign staff leading to a candidate's loss of the right to be elected. To discourage too much competition in a district where two or more representatives

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[4] See, for instance, Sasaki Takeshi (ed.), *Seiji kaikaku 1800 nichi no shinjitsu* (The Truth about the Reformist 1,800 days), Tokyo, Kodansha, 1999.

were being elected under the one-person-one-vote system, two new systems were introduced: the Anglo-American system of choosing one representative in a district with the one-person-one-vote system and the proportional representation system. The former was introduced to bring about more party-focused competition in a district and less intra-party cut-throat competition. The latter was intended to do the same for relatively minor parties and ensure them fairer representation.

The results are somewhat difficult to assess since not many commentators believe that the measures have been effective in terms of reducing excessive competition, focusing on party rivalry and discouraging corruption. As a matter of fact, candidates are now saying that, as a result of the enlargement of a district, they are forced to spend more money, hire more staff, and give more time to campaigning. Party-focused competition seems to be waning as party organizations are freeing themselves from party discipline. Once a candidate gets official party endorsement and campaign money from headquarters, his or her support organization takes control in his or her district. Although Japanese political parties, apart from the Komei Party and the Communist Party, have always been more or less person-focused rather than platform-focused, the trend towards loosening party discipline seems to be continuing. It seems that the political reform legislation, based as it was on platform-focused logic and party-organization-focused logic, may have even exacerbated person-focused competition in each district, while the large amounts of public money allocated to political parties seem to have encouraged candidates to think even bigger in terms of collecting campaign money. The introduction of the proportional representation system appears to help smallish parties to survive, since public money goes to the headquarters of such parties as well. The consequences of all this seem to be the weakening of the largest party in terms of its gaining a plurality, and the fragmentation of the opposition, possibly to an excessive degree.

LEADERSHIP AND POLICY CHANGE

Another pet theme in the 1990s was leadership and policy change.[5] The premise is that it is due to the lack of leadership that Japan has been adrift, despite all the calls for structural change. With leadership, many good things would follow, including policy change.

It seems that the notion of leadership in Japan is somewhat different from that in the United States, where it is of central importance. First, the consensus-beholden Japanese abhor leadership as it means dictatorship to them in practice. Secondly, leadership means the encouragement and enhancement of the authority of politicians, whom many Japanese view with some suspicion and at a distance, whilst they trust bureaucrats more.[6] The populace, the mass media, and no less important, the bureaucrats are all ambivalent about political leadership. Thirdly, the kinds of policy agenda that have been discussed in association with the call for leadership led many people to think three times before they finally decided to go ahead with discussion of the agenda.

The agenda included market liberalization, alliance consolidation, government deficit reduction and patriotism. Market liberalization must come about — and, in the view of most business and bureaucratic leaders, step-by-step, not achieved overnight by the political leadership. Alliance consolidation must be achieved — but within the confines of the constitution and public opinion, according to the majority of business and bureaucratic leaders. Government deficit reduction must be achieved — but without hastily raising consumption tax or reducing social welfare expenditure on pensions, medical insurance, educational subsidies and services for the handicapped and the elderly. Patriotism must be enhanced — and without altering the basic policy line of inward-looking pacifism helped by the alliance with the United States.

It is important to note that all these calls for political leadership came when the United States was emerging as the only superpower on the globe. Anticipating the relentless tide of global market

[5] Richard Samuels has been completing a manuscript comparing Japan and Italy, focusing on the difficult decade of the 1990s and the role that leadership played. Personal conversation, 21 July 2000, Tokyo.

[6] For the comparative figures on political trust in social and political institutions and discussion thereon, see Takashi Inoguchi, 'Social Capital in Japan', *Japanese Journal of Political Science*, 1:1 (May 2000) pp. 73–112.

integration and security unipolarization, the Japanese government must have felt an even greater need to increase government revenue and enhance patriotism. The call for leadership appeared to indicate that Japan needed a very pro-American prime minister, to help it to swallow the bitter medicine of reform.

Hence came the emergence of Morihiro Hosokawa in 1993 after the breakdown of the US–Japan trade negotiation. After the political reform legislation in 1993, he had to swallow another bitter pill, which came this time from the Ministry of Finance in the form of the proposed increase in consumption tax, disguised as social security tax. Facing the vehement opposition to the proposal, he had to resign as prime minister immediately, in 1995. The socialist prime minister, Tomiichi Murayama, who came to office in 1995, had the unsavoury task of declaring that the Socialist-headed government fully approved the US–Japan security alliance and that the constitution did not prevent it from ratifying the US–Japan defence cooperation guidelines.

The LDP prime minister, Ryutaro Hashimoto, came to office with the task of consolidating government revenue by both trimming expenditure and establishing political leadership over the bureaucracy. His administrative-financial reform package of legislation had, however, to wait for his resignation and Keizo Obuchi's accession to power. Bureaucrats resisted it for obvious reasons. Business resisted it for its deflationary tone. Hashimoto resigned, taking responsibility for LDP losses in the House of Councillors election in 1997, which happened at the time when the economy plunged into recession again.

Keizo Obuchi steered three big legislative packages through parliament shortly after assuming office. First, came the administrative-financial reform package; secondly, legislation on the US–Japan defence cooperation guidelines; thirdly, and most important, the huge economic stimulus package to put the economy on track for recovery. The price he paid for these strenuous efforts was his life, following a period in a coma after a stroke, probably induced largely by the stress and fatigue of office, in 2000.

Looked at this way, leadership and policy change is difficult to assess. I can see organizational leadership in Hosokawa, achieving power from outside the LDP and legislating for bold political reform. I can see painful leadership in Murayama, reversing his party's position on the US–Japan security alliance and on the constitution.

I can see bold leadership in Hashimoto, proposing the huge administrative-financial reform package. I can see tenacious leadership in Obuchi, passing three major packages of legislation immediately after he acceded to power, with the help of two smaller coalition partners to secure the parliamentary majority.

LOOKING BEYOND THE GENERAL ELECTION

The Liberal Democratic Party has survived the general election despite a substantial reduction of its seats in the House of Representatives. The Democratic Party has not been able to get the momentum toward gaining power, even though the governing party was in disarray and the economy was only slowly and partially picking up. Can one then draw the conclusion from the above that the prospect for the emergence of a two-party system, as envisaged by some legislators who supported the political reform package in 1994, has turned out to be an illusion? My view is that the emergence of the two-party system in which two parties occasionally alternate in power, as Fortune dictates in the light of the policy programmes and leadership — whereby two parties are able to compete effectively with each other — is somewhat unlikely in the near future.[7]

First, the primary role of party headquarters is not articulating policy platforms. Rather, party headquarters try to aggregate varieties of policy preferences in a number of policy areas, as expressed by party members and public opinion. Of course, they do articulate policy initiatives to a certain extent. But that exercise is generally the thankless task of the headquarters, as party candidates do not pay much attention to policy platforms. They are independent of the party platforms once they are in their districts; they tend to design their own policy platforms to suit themselves. Two minor exceptions to this generalization are the Communist Party and the Komei Party, where party discipline does count for something.

Secondly, the introduction of the mixed representation system in the political reform package of 1994 was not necessarily intended to make the system conducive to the emergence of the two-party

[7] I have benefited from conversation on the subject with Inge Egebo, Tokyo, 4 July 2000.

system. It was rather meant to retain the system of single party dominance without jeopardizing the survival of minor parties. The old representation system, called the medium-size electoral system, produces normally two or more parliamentary members in one district with one vote. Often, one district would elect two or sometimes three candidates of the Liberal Democratic Party. As metropolitan and semi-metropolitan districts elected more non-LDP candidates from the 1970s through the 1990s, the Liberal Democratic Party got alarmed. Its pet scheme since the 1950s was the introduction of the Anglo-American electoral system of one winner taking all in one district with one vote. It is an irony that the introduction of the Anglo-American system was passed into law by the non-LDP coalition government in 1994. Both the non-LDP government and the Liberal Democratic Party favoured the legislation. To weaken the resistance of minor parties which are most likely to fail to gain seats under the Anglo-American electoral system, the proportional representation system was also introduced alongside the Anglo-American system. The number of seats derived from the Anglo-American system is much larger than that derived from proportional representation.

Thirdly, in 2000 shortly before the general election, the legislation to reduce the number of members in the House of Representatives was made as part of the process of slimming-down public institutions. Hence the reduction of the size of the House of Representatives from 500 to 480 seats took place. This should work in favour of the Liberal Democratic Party, as non-LDP parties get more votes and seats through the proportional representation system. Despite all this, the Liberal Democratic Party had been losing seats in the House of Representatives elections throughout the 1990s. A solution for the Liberal Democratic Party has been a coalition with minor parties to achieve a legislative majority in the House of Representatives. The Komei Party and the Liberal Party were partners under Prime Minister Obuchi, towards the end of whose tenure the coalition broke down, whereon the Liberal Party, headed by Ichiro Ozawa, made an exit from the arrangement and the breakaway party from the Liberal Party, the Conservative Party, stayed in coalition with the Liberal Democratic Party. Since the Liberal Democratic Party does not enjoy a legislative majority in the House of Councillors, it had to take steps in order to demonstrate its responsibility as a governing party. Hence came the swift confirmation of coalition

formation with the Komei Party and the Conservative Party immediately after the exit of the Liberal Party from the coalition.

Fourthly, one method for making up a majority for the Liberal Democratic Party has been the recruitment of independent candidates into its fold after the elections. This time, out of fifteen independents, at least ten are highly likely to join the Liberal Democratic Party after a while. That means that the Liberal Democratic Party will have slightly more than a majority, even without its coalition partners. It seems that despite all obstacles, the Liberal Democratic Party will contrive to hang on to power for the time being.

Besides the question of the possible emergence of the two-party system in Japan, there is one no less intriguing issue: the decline of party politics. One pronounced phenomenon of this general election has been the loosening of party discipline in electoral mobilization. One could argue that there had been no party-led electoral mobilization in the district for most of the centre-right parties in the first place. What does exist is the personal support organization, which mobilizes electoral support for one candidate in the district. But this time even this type of personal support organization did not work very well. The devastating defeat of LDP candidates in so many districts, i.e., the districts which have the prefecture capital city, is evidence of the declining power of LDP organization in support of individual candidates. The new opposition party, the Democratic Party, has an even weaker party organization and a personal support organization of a more primitive kind. Much the same can be said of party organizations of the Liberal Party, the Conservative Party and the Social Democratic Party. In a slightly different category are the Communist Party and the Komei Party. But this time these two parties, which used to boast of the iron discipline of party organization, experienced a humiliating loss of seats. They were simply not able to mobilize many of those voters who used to vote for their parties until the recent past. Needless to say, these are not sufficient conditions for the decline of party organization. Yet it seems fair to say that through the political party spectrum, the ability to activate latent support at election time seems to be declining, that those candidates relying on certain sectors of manufacturing, commerce and construction for their campaign money seem to be much fewer, and that campaigning seems to depend increasingly on candidates' appeal to the public on policy and personal attributes. Not only

party headquarters but also those legislative tribes (zoku giin), who built their legislative career through a certain policy committee in the party and the National Diet, seem to have become much less influential.[8] In striking contrast to zoku giin, those making best use of e-mail and the Internet seem to be in the ascendant. I call them 'e-giin', electronic parliamentarians. They use e-mail and the Internet for policy dissemination, support mobilization, networking, policy debates and personal publicity.[9]

All this seems to indicate the direction of Japanese party politics. The decline of party organization is not the only important feature, but the increasing significance of individualized electoral campaigning and mobilization must also be taken into account. Thus the two-party system is not likely to emerge in the near future. Party organization and party discipline are becoming past phenomena rather than present features of the political scene.

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[8] Inoguchi Takashi and Iwai Tomoaki, *Zoku giin no kenkyu* (A Study of Legislative Tribes), Tokyo, Nihon Keizai Shimbunsha, 1987.

[9] I have been working on the project of e-giin (e-parliamentarians) with Tomoaki Iwai and Yoshikazu Iwabuchi.