



Pergamon

Electoral Studies 19 (2000) 447–477

**Electoral
Studies**

www.elsevier.com/locate/electstud

Discussion

Japan's new electoral system: la plus ça change . . .

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Abstract

We examine the impact on parties and candidates of Japan's new electoral rules, first used in the 1996 House of Representatives election. We argue that the Japanese rules, which not only permit dual candidacy but also allow votes cast in the single member district (SMD) portion of the race to allocate proportional representation (PR) seats to dual candidates, effectively defeat the purposes of electoral reform. The new arrangement transforms PR representatives into locally-based politicians who will rely on personalistic rather than party-based or programmatic campaigning, effectively converts single-member districts back into the multi-member districts of the past, enhances incumbency advantage, and will push the ratio of candidates to seats down as low or even lower than before. © 1999 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

In October 1996 Japan conducted the first House of Representatives (HR) election based on a new side-by-side electoral system (also called parallel, mixed, or two-tiered) containing both single member districts (SMD) and proportional representation (PR) seats. This system was adopted amid much excitement that at last Japanese voters might have a choice: the old system seemed to produce one-party dominance no matter what voters tried, and the new system offered them at least the possibility of alternation in power between two large parties, a competitive atmosphere that might incline both parties to appeal more to voter demands. However, we believe that the new system may place as many—or more—obstacles in the way of new parties and new politicians as the old system did. The new system may indeed produce alternation in power between two parties, but these two parties will consist

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almost entirely of incumbents, and it will be quite difficult for voters to bring new faces into parliament.

In their creative and cogent analysis of the systemic underpinnings of candidate behavior, Carey and Shugart (1995) offer great insight into the effects of standard single-tier systems. Similarly, we have elsewhere (McKean and Scheiner, 1998b) devised a typology of side-by-side systems, focusing on the degree to which different variants of such systems encourage issue-based politics and proportionality. In the spirit of this work, we focus here on Japan's substantial utilization of dual candidacy to link the two segments of the new system, a feature that will not only protect incumbents and suppress turnover in office, but will also encourage personalistic candidate behavior.¹

The proportional representation seats in the new parliament might operate as a conduit for new parties and new candidates into parliament via split ballots, and the 1996 electoral results show that voters will take the trouble to vote for a party in the PR segment that cannot offer candidates in every single member district (McKean and Scheiner, 1998a). However, other factors will operate as barriers to new parties and truly new candidates within the established parties. The unusual dual candidacy rule permits individuals to run as candidates in both the SMD and PR components of parliament. Both parties and candidates find dual candidacy extremely convenient because it reduces decision-making difficulties and risk for them both. However, dual candidacy can also reduce the number of individuals running for office, thus reducing choices available to voters. Moreover, dual SMD-PR candidates in Japan will campaign as if they were simply SMD candidates. The none-too-subtle pressures in the system to use dual candidacies will perpetuate the personal vote and personal support organizations, as well as the inheritance of electoral seats by children and staffers of retiring incumbents, a well-established practice under the old electoral system that enables incumbents to overcome their own mortality. Thus the new electoral rules are unlikely to expand Japanese voters' opportunities to choose truly fresh faces.

Indeed, we believe that the ratio of candidates to seats may even drop below the equilibrium levels for the old electoral system. Although 1503 persons stood as candidates for the 500 seats in the HR in 1996, we believe that the above factors will combine to reduce the number of candidates in each general election for the 500 open seats down toward 600 persons and a candidate-to-seat ratio of only 1.2, rather than the ratio of 2 that Duverger's law would predict for a system based entirely on single member districts. This will make it quite difficult for Japanese voters to inject new blood into their parliament. The incumbency advantage seen in the old system (Hayama, 1992; Reed, 1994) will persist in the new one, and this incumbency advantage will also reduce pressure on parties to develop deeper grass-

¹ Dual candidacy exists in many side-by-side systems, but it can take many different forms and produce different results. On the pivotal significance of dual candidacy rules for the resulting nature of representation in such systems, see McKean and Scheiner (1998b).

roots organizations and thus further depress political innovation and responsiveness to new demands, even during unstable transitional times.

1. Historical background and overview of 1996 results

From 1947 to 1993 the Japanese House of Representatives used an unusual electoral system combining multi-member districts (MMD) with the single non-transferable vote (SNTV). This system has attracted much attention and blame for its impact on party and candidate strategies, electoral campaigns based on personal traits of candidates rather than issues or party platforms, extremely expensive campaigns paid for with funds acquired through corruption, politicians' incentives to deliver private pork rather than public goods to constituents, and one-party dominance for almost four decades by the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP).

In July 1993 this dominance appeared to come to an end as a no-confidence motion supported by dozens of LDP members toppled the LDP government. The LDP lost its majority in the 1993, so instead a coalition of eight non-Communist anti-LDP parties formed the new government. However, this coalition of many partners across a broad ideological spectrum was predictably unstable, and in 1994 the LDP returned to power in a new coalition government with the Japan Socialist Party (JSP) and the small Harbinger Party (Sakigake). The newly formed New Frontier Party (NFP), combining a group of defectors (the short-lived Revival or Renewal Party) led by Ozawa Ichirô out of the LDP along with Hosokawa Morihiro's new group (launched as the Japan New Party), led the opposition, composed of the remainder of the non-Communist parties. The Japan Communist Party (JCP) remained, as usual, on its own.

In 1994, the non-LDP government enacted into law a new electoral system (Christensen 1994a,b, 1996), adding Japan to the growing list of countries that have adopted side-by-side electoral arrangements, in which politicians elected according to two different voting schemes sit alongside each other in a legislative body.² Japan's new system consists of 300 single-member districts, each carved from the 129 larger MMDs of the old system, and 200 proportional representation seats to be chosen in eleven regional "blocks", each a cluster of several prefectures. As in most other side-by-side systems, candidates may run in both systems simultaneously, taking the SMD seat if they win it, and preserving the possibility of winning a PR seat even if they lose the SMD race, if they are ranked highly enough on their party's PR list.

This new system was utilized for the first time in the October 20, 1996 HR election. The LDP and the NFP remained the two largest parties, but the rapidly atrophying JSP, now renamed the Social Democratic Party or SDP in Japanese as well as English, won fewer seats than the JCP did for the first time in postwar history.

² For an analysis of the important distinguishing features of side-by-side systems, see McKean and Scheiner (1998b).

The brand-new Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), formed from defectors from the LDP, the centrist parties, and especially from the JSP shortly before the election, became Japan's third largest party. The LDP's 239 seats were short of a HR majority, so the LDP formed a minority government with support from its pre-election coalition partners, the much-shrunk JSP/SDP and the also-dwindling Harbingers (Sakigake). Because of the LDP's success in SMDs, it managed to channel a mere 35.7% of the total (combined SMD and PR) vote into 47.8% of the total seats. The differences between votes in SMDs and matching PR segments strongly suggested significant split ticket voting, much to the LDP's disadvantage in the PR segment (McKean and Scheiner, 1998a). Many of the dual candidates running in both SMD and PR segments to improve their chance of a seat were successful, and 84 seats went to SMD losers who won PR seats instead. Because we believe that Japan's very unusual dual candidacy rule has crucial impact on the way the new electoral system works, we will examine it carefully below.

2. Dual candidacy in 1996

Although scholars do not expect new electoral rules to produce the expected effects immediately, apparently many hopeful observers in Japan were upset to find that promised improvements did not materialize immediately. Much anger focussed on the dual candidacy rules. A *Yomiuri shimbun* editorial on the day after the election complained:

The new system did not work as planned ... The general election was intended to focus on policies and political parties ... The poll ... failed to achieve that goal and ended up being a kind of 'transitional election'. The campaign was not waged on the basis of policies, with candidates relying instead of conventional methods and their individual networks. The parties failed to come up with specific policies from which the voters could choose. Thus the election was fought in a way that was far from what was intended, exposing flaws in the new system. For instance, candidates who were rejected by voters in single-seat constituencies won seats through proportional representation. (21 October 1996)

Angry voter reaction to the way the dual candidacy rule operated in October 1996 indicates that it was very poorly understood by most people.³ Many voters were

³ A *Yomiuri shimbun* poll on October 5 asked respondents if they understood the new system. Only 5.3% said they understood it well, 32.7% said they understood it somewhat, 42.6% said they did not understand much about it, and 18.3% said they did not understand it at all. An *Asahi shimbun* telephone poll conducted on 21–22 October after the election indicated that only 19% of eligible voters liked the new system and 60% were unhappy with it and would prefer to change it. Within that 60%, 32% were willing to return to the MMD/SNTV system, 19% to an all-SMD system, and 5% to an all-PR system. See *Asahi shimbun* (23 October 1996) *Jishasa renritsu keizoku wo 28%* [28% favor continuation of the LDP-SDP-Harbinger coalition] pp. 1–2.

grievously disappointed to discover that in practice it really did mean that candidates defeated in SMDs could still win PR seats anyway, and newspaper commentary and editorials lambasted the system for this feature. Seventy percent of all respondents to a post-election *Asahi Shimbun* poll indicated unhappiness with the dual-candidacy rule (*Asahi Shimbun*, October 23, 1996).

PR systems usually require that parties prepare a list of candidates, ranked in advance of the election. The number of votes a party receives will determine how many PR seats it wins, and the party's rankings determine which candidates on the list actually fill its seats. Some PR systems also provide for preference voting, in which voters can cast ballots for particular candidates on the list, in effect altering the party rankings determined ahead of time and awarding a seat to their highly preferred candidate. As we will see, Japanese voters can also dictate some or all of the candidate rankings on party PR lists, though they do so unintentionally! SMD-PR side-by-side systems introduce additional complexity when they allow individual candidates to run in an SMD and simultaneously occupy a slot on a party's PR list. Those dual candidates who win the single-member constituency race take the SMD seat and leave the PR list, allowing all candidates ranked beneath them on the party's PR list to move up a notch. Some dual candidates running in both systems will fail to win an SMD but will still win a PR seat because they were highly ranked on their party list. Thus it is reasonably commonplace in side-by-side systems for dual candidacies to occur and also for SMD losers to enter parliament anyway as PR seat-holders, but apparently without much distress or alarm from voters in countries other than Japan.

The new Japanese electoral system permits dual candidacies, but with a unique, possibly even bizarre, difference. As far as we can determine, all PR systems other than Japan's require parties to rank all of their PR candidates in advance of the election (even if there is also preference voting by which voters may alter the ranks established by parties). Japan's parties must necessarily rank all of their candidates who are running only in the PR constituency, but only in Japan may parties leave some or all of their dual candidates in groups within which all individuals remain equally ranked on the PR list. The votes that these equally ranked dual candidates collect in SMDs will create rankings among them after the election. As the election results are finalized, each dual candidate who wins an SMD race (whether ranked individually in the standard fashion or a member of an evenly ranked group) takes that SMD seat and leaves the PR list. At this point the dual candidates who remain on the PR list are all SMD losers, and those who are in clusters of equally ranked SMD losers must now receive individual rankings. A score for each such SMD loser is calculated by dividing the SMD votes the candidate collected by the votes accumulated by the winner of the SMD seat (whatever the winner's party) in that district. All dual candidates from a party who were listed together before the election as equally ranked members of a group on that party's regional PR list (from all of the SMDs included within that PR region) can now be ranked on their party's PR list according to the value of this ratio. The closer that dual candidates who are in evenly ranked groups of individuals on their party PR list come to winning in their SMD, the higher their score and post-election ranking within their evenly ranked

cohort and the more likely they are to win a PR seat after all—a consolation prize for losing, but only barely, an SMD seat. It is vital to note that this new ranking based on voter preference occurs within parties across districts, not across parties within districts.

To illustrate this procedure more clearly, in Table 1 we present the PR list that the LDP used in the Tokyo Block in 1996. Although the entire block contains only 19 seats in all, the LDP listed 28 candidates, 25 of them dual candidates running close races in SMDs. Dual candidacies allow, even require, a party to offer a PR list much longer than the number of PR seats actually available. Only one of the LDP's dual candidates was ranked individually (Fukaya, at #1), and the rest were in two clusters: 11 of them, all incumbents, equally ranked at position #4, and 13 of them, all new faces except for two former seat-holders, equally ranked at position #15. Fourteen of the 25 dual candidates did win an SMD seat and therefore left the PR list. Total votes in the Tokyo regional block awarded the LDP 5 PR seats to distribute to the remaining 11 duals and 3 pure PR candidates left on the PR list after SMD winners were removed. As we can see, the first of these seats went to Fukaya, the highest-ranking candidate on the list. Although he was a dual candidate and SMD loser, he won this seat on the basis of his #1 PR ranking, not on the basis of his SMD performance (he would have won this seat even with no SMD votes at all). The second and third PR seats went to the pure PR candidates (Kujiraoka and Takahashi) who were ranked at #2 and #3, respectively, on the PR list, and they, like Fukaya, won strictly on the basis of their PR ranking. The fourth and fifth PR seats that the LDP won went to two of the dual candidates who were clumped together with nine others and all ranked equally at the #4 position on the original PR list.

If we examine this clump (#4) of candidates, we see that 8 of them left the list by winning their SMDs. Three equally ranked SMD losers remained—Osawa, Ochi, and Ôuchi—for whom there were only two seats to go around. Their SMD performance—how close they came to winning the SMD seats they actually lost—is what determined the post-election rankings among these three. Osawa (88.91%) and Ochi (76.14%) did better, compared to the SMD winners who defeated them in Tokyo 21 and Tokyo 6 respectively, than Ôuchi did in Tokyo 4, where Ôuchi gathered only 59.43% as many votes as the SMD winner. Thus Osawa and Ochi won the two remaining PR seats available to the LDP in the Tokyo block. Had either Fukaya, Osawa, or Ochi won his SMD race, one more SMD winner would have left the PR list, and Ôuchi would have found himself a PR winner on the basis of his ranking (in the clump placed in the #4 position) and his SMD performance within that group. Thus we see that the fate of dual candidates is determined partly by their ranking on the PR list (both the ranking of their cluster and the post-election ranking based on how “well” they lost their SMD race) and partly by how many who outrank them win their SMD race and leave the list. One's own hard work in one's own SMD is not necessarily enough, as we see for Shimizu, Matsushima, and Kondô, who came much closer than any other SMD-losing LDP duals in this PR block to winning their SMD races but lost PR seats because they were in the new-face cluster ranked at #15, too far down to win PR consolation seats. We should note that if parties favor

Table 1
The LDP PR list for the Tokyo block in 1996^a

Pre-election ranking on PR list Name	Incumbency status	SMD that duals also ran in	SMD result (1st wins SMD)	Party and votes of SMD winner	Votes candidate received in SMD	Ratio of candidate's SMD votes to votes of winner in SMD	Post-election ranking on PR list
1—Fukaya Ryūji	7 term inc	Tokyo 2	2	DPI: 88,183	68,503	77.68	1
2—Kujiraoka Hyōsuke	11 term inc	Pure PR	—	—	—	—	2
3—Takahashi Ichirō	3 term inc	Pure PR	—	—	—	—	3
4—Osawa Kiyoshi	6 term inc	Tokyo 21	2	DPI: 55,458	49,308	88.91	4
4—Ochi Michio	7 term inc	Tokyo 6	2	Rev: 82,106	62,518	76.14	5
4—Itō Ksuke	5 term inc	Tokyo 23	1	—	85,035	—	—
4—Kosugi Ryū	5 term inc	Tokyo 5	1	—	84,731	—	—
4—Yosano Kei	6 term inc	Tokyo 1	1	—	82,098	—	—
4—Shimamura Sadanobu	6 term inc	Tokyo 16	1	—	77,753	—	—
4—Ishihara Nobuteru	2 term inc	Tokyo 8	1	—	74,856	—	—
4—Kishimoto Jin'ichirō	1 term inc	Tokyo 3	1	—	73,055	—	—
4—Kasuya Shigeru	8 term inc	Tokyo 7	1	—	65,332	—	—
4—Kakizawa Hiroshi	5 term inc	Tokyo 15	1	—	61,701	—	—
4—Ōuchi Keigo	6 term inc	Tokyo 4	2	none: 78,805	46,840	59.43	6
15—Kobayashi Tamon	New	Tokyo 24	1	—	75,061	—	—
15—Hirasawa Shōei	New	Tokyo 17	1	—	73,726	—	—
15—Ishikawa Yōzō	6 term former	Tokyo 25	1	—	72,180	—	—
15—Shimomura Hirobumi	New	Tokyo 11	1	—	68,321	—	—
15—Yashiro Eita	New	Tokyo 12	1	—	61,461	—	—
15—Kobayashi Okikazu	1 term former	Tokyo 10	1	—	52,787	—	—
15—Shimizu Seichirō	New	Tokyo 20	2	Rev: 55,559	54,581	98.24	7
15—Matsushima Midori	New	Tokyo 14	2	Rev: 60,995	58,581	96.04	8
15—Kondō Nobuyoshi	New	Tokyo 13	2	Rev: 70,697	65,191	92.21	9
15—Shindō Yūji	New	Tokyo 22	3	Rev: 69,707	49,837	71.49	10
15—Gutsu Ishimatsu	New	Tokyo 9	3	Rev: 67,675	43,766	64.68	11
15—Kaneko Tetsurō	New	Tokyo 19	3	DPI: 76,599	47,675	62.23	12
15—Ōkubo Chikara	New	Tokyo 18	3	DPI: 116,910	23,566	20.15	13
28—Nakamura Yasushi	5 term former	Pure PR	—	—	—	—	14

^a First five rows in bold identify the five LDP winners of PR seats; candidates within blocks have been regrouped (compared to LDP original lists) in order of vote totals (for SMD winners) or ratio of votes won to votes of winners (for SMD losers).

incumbents over promising new faces in assigning ranks to clusters of dual candidates, it will be very hard for strong new candidates to win seats over weaker incumbents. Finally, one might mention candidate #28, Nakamura Yasushi, a former representative running in last place on the list as a pure PR candidate, who could have won a PR seat only if the LDP had done so well in the SMD segment that even more of the duals would have won their SMDs and left the list above him, and so well in the PR segment that the LDP would have won more PR seats in Tokyo.

The Japanese rule requires parties to make two decisions: to choose between separate candidacies and dual candidacy for each regional PR block and every SMD within that block, and then to decide whether to rank the dual candidates individually or leave them clumped together with equal ranks. Large parties running long PR slates can actually have more than one grouping or cohort of equally ranked PR candidates on their list, with ranked candidates coming above, below, and between these groupings. Japan's parties in 1996 opted for enormous variety in combinations and sequences of rankings and evenly ranked groupings for their PR lists (see Tables 2 and 3; for additional detail and samples of party PR lists, see also McKean and Scheiner, 1997). They varied according to whether they used dual candidacies, and among those that used dual candidacies they varied according to whether they ranked them individually or left them ranked equally in clumps, to be sorted out by the voters in their respective SMDs. In particular, two parties, the NFP and the JCP, had very distinctive nomination and listing strategies.

The NFP led by Ozawa Ichirô minimized its use of dual candidates, and avoided evenly ranked groupings, apparently for several reasons. First, the NFP expected that most of the candidates that it had inherited from the Clean Government Party (CGP, or Kômeitô)—a party disliked by large numbers of Japanese but also a party whose supporters are well organized but thinly spread throughout Japan's cities—could win only as PR candidates and only rarely as SMD candidates. Since there was little value in designating many of these people as dual candidates, the NFP used most of its CGP candidates on the PR list and saved SMD slots for less controversial candidates (Reed, 1995). Second, Ozawa himself apparently disliked the idea of dual candidacy, and he managed to enforce his preference to minimize its use on regional branches of the NFP composing PR lists for the 11 regional blocks (Reed, 1995). Ozawa was reportedly concerned that dual candidacy would lead to less than wholehearted campaigning by those who felt that they had the additional insurance of a PR seat. We argue below that dual candidates need to campaign locally as if they were pure SMD candidates, and when parties list many dual candidates (as in the LDP list described above), a dual candidacy offers little guarantee of a PR seat as a fallback position, so should not suppress energetic campaigning. However, if parties make sparing use of dual candidacy, they may well be giving their duals a good chance of a PR seat: in this situation, dual candidates would of course concentrate whatever campaigning they engage in at the local level, but they might well campaign less energetically than a pure SMD candidate would. Thus Ozawa's fears may not have been entirely misplaced here. A final concern of Ozawa's (echoed by Gallagher, 1998) may have been that strategically inclined voters would assume that the duals did not need votes as badly as pure SMD candidates, and might also vote so as to

maximize the number of representatives with a link to the SMD rather than to maximize representation from a particular party. In this way, dual candidacy might operate as a “signal” that would drive votes away from the party that relied on it.

Like the NFP, The JCP also chose to avoid evenly ranked groupings in its lists of PR candidates, but unlike the NFP, the JCP made frequent use of dual candidacies. The JCP has nominated a candidate in every electoral district regardless of the prospects of victory or defeat throughout the postwar period. It was undoubtedly a stretch to put candidates in 299 districts in 1996 (all except the second district in Okinawa), and this certainly made dual candidacies appealing to the JCP. Because the JCP and the CGP (which made up part of the NFP) were the two parties with strong central party organizations before 1996, it is tempting to conclude that strong parties are more able to make these ranking decisions for the PR lists. However, as we will see below, using clumps of equally ranked candidates not only bypasses factional infighting over individual rankings, but also replaces costly information-gathering in close races, and strong parties may be just as interested as weak ones in reaping both of these advantages.

In contrast to the NFP and the JCP, the LDP and the DPJ, as well as the smaller parties, took full advantage of dual candidacies and also left large numbers of them in evenly ranked groupings. If they used any PR-only candidates at all, they put a few noteworthies at the top (like the LDP’s Kujiraoka, former vice-speaker of the House of Representatives, in Table 1). These might be candidates who might draw votes to the party’s list as a whole but who could not have run in an SMD without intruding upon the turf of another candidate from the same party in that district who had strong local support and was highly likely to win that SMD. At the bottom were a few unlikelies and loyal party staffers, and in between came the dual candidates. The parties that left some candidates equally ranked usually had just one such grouping in a regional PR list. But because the LDP was a large party and the brand-new DPJ aspired to become a big one fast, both prepared fairly long PR lists for each of the 11 regional PR blocks and put more than one evenly ranked grouping on some of their PR lists (see Tables 2 and 3). By and large, in these PR lists with more than one equally ranked grouping of candidates, the more highly ranked grouping of equally ranked candidates contained incumbents, and the lower-ranked grouping of equally ranked candidates contained new faces, but the correspondence is not perfect. One would need detailed knowledge of individual candidates and nominating procedures to understand why the DPJ saw fit to create four groupings of equally ranked candidates in its PR list for the Tokyo block, or why the LDP opted to group its 28 candidates for the Tokyo block into 6 rankings, but leave 42 of its 44 candidates for the Kinki block all ranked together at the top (with two loyal party staffers taking positions 43 and 44 at the bottom just in case the LDP did that well). Smaller parties like the Social Democrats, the New Socialists (both descended from the former JSP), the Liberty League, the Democratic Reform League, and the Harbingers tended to run short PR lists of evenly ranked dual candidates.

Table 2
Party strategies for proportional representation list^a

	LDP		NFP		DPJ		SDP		NSP		JCP		Sakigake		Liberal League		Dem Ref League	
	PR	Dual	PR	Dual	PR	Dual	PR	Dual	PR	Dual	PR	Dual	PR	Dual	PR	Dual	PR	Dual
Hokkaidô	2	13	4	0	4	11	0	0	0	1	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
		12	-	-	-	11	-	-	-	-	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
Tôhoku	10	16	14	0	2	7	0	11	0	1	2	1	-	-	0	1	-	-
		11,5	-	-	-	7	11	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hokuriku	7	18	8	2	0	7	0	2	0	1	1	2	0	1	-	-	-	-
		18	2	2	-	7	2	-	-	-	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
N Kantô	10	26	14	0	0	16	1	2	0	2	2	3	0	1	0	11	-	-
		13,13	-	-	-	16	2	2	2	2	0	0	-	-	-	11	-	-
Tôkyô	3	25	14	1	4	24	0	6	0	3	4	3	-	-	0	2	-	-
		11,13	0	0	-	3,4,3,13	5	5	2	2	0	0	-	-	-	2	-	-
S Kantô	5	31	13	1	3	24	1	2	1	3	2	3	-	-	0	11	-	-
		4,27	-	-	-	24	0	0	3	3	0	0	-	-	-	10	-	-
Tôkai	5	33	16	0	0	15	1	2	1	0	2	2	-	-	0	1	-	-
		32	-	-	-	15	2	2	-	-	0	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kinki	2	42	23	1	2	21	2	1	0	4	4	9	1	3	0	11	0	1
		42	-	-	-	3,15	-	-	4	4	0	0	0	0	11	11	-	-

Central	9	18	5	1	0	6	0	5	0	7	1	2	1	0	–	–	–	–
		18		–		6		5		6		0		–				
Shikoku	5	11	3	0	2	3	0	4	0	1	1	2	–	–	–	–	–	–
		11		–		3		4		0		0		–				
Kyūshū	9	26	12	1	1	7	0	8	0	1	2	2	0	4	0	13	–	–
		2,23		–		7		8		–		0		3		13		
TOTAL	67	260	126	7	18	141	5	43	2	24	22	31	2	9	0	50	0	1
% candidates who are dual	260/327	7/133			141/159		43/48		24/26	31/53	9/11	50/50	1/1					
	79.51%	5.26%			88.68%		89.58%		93.31%	58.49%	81.82%	100%						
% of dual candidates who are in cohorts of two or more (clumps of equally ranked candidates)	256/260	2/2	100%		137/141		39/42		17/19	0/30	3/7	46/48						
	98.46%				97.16%		92.86%		89.47%	0%	42.85%	95.83%						

^a Lefthand column under each party is the number of pure PR candidates. Righthand column under each party is the number of dual candidates. Lower entry in righthand column under each party is the number of equally ranked dual candidates (those who were in clumps of equally ranked candidates) in each cohort of equally ranked duals, in descending order down the party's PR list.

Table 3
Party use of cohorts of equally ranked candidates

Party	All candidates equally ranked	List contains 1 clump of equally ranked candidates	List contains 2 clumps of equally ranked candidates	List contains 3 cohorts of equally ranked candidates	List contains 4 cohorts of equally ranked candidates	All candidates individually ranked
LDP		Hokkaidô, Hokuriku, Central, Kinki, Shikoku	Tôhoku, N Kantô, Tôkyô, S Kantô, Kyûshû			
NFP						All 11 regions
DPJ	Hokuriku, N Kantô, Tôkai, Central	Hokkaidô, Tôhoku, S Kantô, Shikoku, Kyûshû	Kinki		Tokyo	
JCP						All 11 regions
SDP	Tôhoku, Hokuriku, Central, Shikoku, Kyûshû	N Kantô, Tôkyô, Tôkai				
NSP	N Kantô, Kinki	Tôkyô, S Kantô, Central				
SAKIGAKE		Kyushu				
LIBERAL	N Kantô,	S Kantô				
LEAGUE	Tôkyô, Kinki, Kyûshû					

3. The long-term impact of Japan's dual candidacy rule

Under the new system, parties have four types of candidacies to choose amongst: pure SMD, dual candidates with individual rankings, dual candidates grouped into clumps of candidates all ranked equally, and pure PR. These different forms give parties considerable flexibility about placing candidates strategically. Presumably, most parties would only nominate candidates with fairly good chances of winning an SMD for either pure SMD or SMD-PR dual candidacies, although a party without the chance of victory might choose to launch an SMD candidacy in order to build strength gradually. We assembled Table 4 to explore the different success rates for these four types of candidates, hoping to figure out whether dual candidates who

Table 4
Electoral success of different PR ranking strategies

Party	Candidates who ran as SMD only			Candidates who ran in cohorts of equally ranked duals			Candidates who ran as individually ranked duals			Candidates who ran as pure PR (individually ranked)		
	Wins	Cands	Winners/cands (%)	Wins	Cands	Winners/cands (%)	Wins	Cands	Winners/cands (%)	Wins	Cands	Winners/cands (%)
LDP	23	28	82.1%	175	256	68.4%	3	4	75.0%	38	67	56.7%
NFP	95	228	41.7%	1	2	50.0%	2	5	40.0%	58	126	46.0%
DPJ	0	2	0.0%	38	137	27.7%	4	4	100.0%	10	18	55.6%
JCP	0	268	0.0%	0	0	na	18	31	58.1%	8	22	36.4%
SDP	0	0	na	0	0	na	13	43	30.2%	2	5	40.0%
Sakigake	2	4	50.0%	0	0	na	0	9	0.0%	0	2	0.0%
NSP	0	13	0.0%	0	0	na	0	24	0.0%	0	2	0.0%
Lib League	0	38	0.0%	0	0	na	0	50	0.0%	0	0	na
Dem Reform	0	1	0.0%	0	0	na	1	1	100.0%	0	0	na
Minor	0	28	0.0%	0	0	na	0	0	na	0	0	na
Indep	9	85	10.6%	0	0	na	0	0	na	0	0	na
TOTAL	129	695	18.6%	214	395	54.2%	41	171	24.0%	116	242	47.9%

were individually ranked did better than those who were in clumps of equally ranked candidates. However, it is impossible to distinguish the effect of running in these four categories from parties' strategic use of these four categories for different kinds of (and thus not comparable) candidates. To learn whether a dual candidate is better off running with an individual ranking or in a cluster with other candidates, one would need to study carefully matched groups of candidates, taking care to eliminate the individually ranked candidates who are added to the bottoms of party lists as "safe padding" (in case of a huge PR vote) from the pool for study, and to examine internal party politics in nominating candidates. Presumably Japan's political parties are struggling to figure this out too.

Even though it turns out to be quite difficult to diagnose which kind of candidacy may be best for particular candidates and parties, we can still improve our understanding of the incentives and opportunities created by the new electoral system. It is vital to note at the outset that Japanese parties have a strong incentive to increase their candidate-based SMD victories above and apart from their party-based efforts to win PR seats. In side-by-side systems with pure proportionality (Germany and New Zealand for instance), the total PR vote for each party determines the total number of seats each party wins, and the SMD contests are simply a way to determine which particular individuals occupy some of those seats. Every SMD won counts as one of the party's total allowable seats in parliament and is deducted from the number of seats remaining to be filled by candidates pulled from the party's PR list. This creates a conflict of interest between candidates in SMDs, who want to win their SMDs, and parties in such systems, which are in a sense indifferent to SMD victories and instead need to maximize votes cast for the party's PR list to maximize total seats won. In Japan, however, SMD victories do not reduce or "count against" seats won in the PR segment. Therefore, Japanese parties should be just as enthusiastic about winning SMDs as their individual SMD (pure and dual) candidates are.

In making decisions about dual candidacy and individual versus group rankings, parties should match their pure SMD and dual candidates to SMDs with considerable care. Even though they can afford to have long PR lists to start with, from whom fewer may win, a party needs to rank PR candidates and gauge its likely popular support carefully, in order to make sure that the PR seats it wins will actually go to the "right" party politicians. We believe that dual candidacy and the use of clusters of equally ranked candidates are useful to candidates and parties in reducing risk, building local support, gathering vital information, and replacing difficult decisions.

Dual candidacy per se (regardless of ranking strategy) is attractive to candidates largely because it reduces risk to candidates and provides them with a clear strategy for building a political career. SMD candidates running in a hotly contested race might want to be highly placed on the party's PR list just in case they lose the SMD, and some PR candidates might want to run as duals in order to build a more secure base in an SMD for future re-election. Dual candidates who win PR seats with a local SMD base are similar to SMD incumbents and have an increasing chance of winning their SMD seats in future elections, an advantage that pure PR seat-holders do not have. Thus dual candidacy offers them both incentive and opportunity to

build local support, to become crucial to their party's district organization, to acquire leverage within the party, and thus to control their own destiny. Dual candidacy is also beneficial for parties. Parties may want to place some strong leaders on the top of the PR list to attract PR votes, but by listing them also as dual candidates in SMDs that they are highly likely to win, the party can present voters with a PR slate loaded with well-known names to attract votes while also giving a real chance at a PR seat to some of the lesser-knowns ranked further down on the party's PR list. Parties can also use dual candidacy as a way to encourage PR seat-holders to build future strength in an SMD they might be able to win for the party in the next election (McKean and Scheiner, 1998a). Because dual candidacy offers SMD candidates insurance and PR candidates a local future, parties can use dual candidacy to experiment over time with putting the right candidates in the right place. Instead of having to figure out which candidates can really win SMDs and which ones should be put on a pure PR list, or in which SMDs the party stands a strong chance of winning, parties have the option of putting dual candidates in all SMDs, and allowing the voters to decide who gets the SMD seats and who gets PR consolation seats. Dual candidacy is also an incentive-compatible mechanism for parties to encourage candidates to campaign energetically in SMDs rather than relying solely on their PR ranking to give them victory. The vigorous campaigning that is good for the candidate also enhances the party's presence in an SMD and thereby increases the party's ability to predict future SMD outcomes there. Thus dual candidacy replaces hard decisions and challenging guess-work for parties. The mutual interest that candidates and parties share in building local bases in SMDs may in turn confer a competitive advantage on parties willing to offer dual candidacy in recruiting new and keeping old talent, since candidates will be more willing to run in SMDs if they have the added protection of a dual candidacy.

The provision that allows parties to avoid ranking individual dual candidates on the PR list by grouping them together in a clump is probably less attractive to candidates than it is to parties. Candidates' reactions to being assigned to a cohort of equally ranked colleague-competitors depends on whether they would have expected high or low individual rankings on the PR list instead. For the candidates, this clumping replaces the certainty of an individual PR ranking with uncertainty and challenge but also with the opportunity to rise within the clump (and in the long run perhaps within the party as well) on the basis of their own efforts. The larger the cohort of individuals with equal rankings, the greater the candidate's incentive to campaign locally. This effort, in return, offers benefits in the form of a growing local support base that the candidate can capture individually, enhancing the candidate's standing within the party.

Clumping individuals together without assigning individual rankings is probably quite attractive to parties that have internal divisions or are unsure of their competitive standing in local contests. In 1986, the 100 seats of the national constituency in the House of Councillors (HC) were converted from a gigantic MMD into a national PR constituency (Flanagan, 1991, 432). Since then, Japan's parties have shown themselves to be capable of assigning individual rankings to candidates for the PR race, which can be considered a lower-stakes rehearsal for

the new system in the House of Representatives. However, the HR dual candidacy rule permitting clusters of evenly-ranked candidates offers parties a way to avoid the difficult decisions (especially with incumbents) involved in awarding individual ranks on the PR list. The rule that creates post-election individual rankings according to SMD performance is presumably a surrogate, based on similar criteria of popularity and recognition among voters, for the decision rule that a party would try to use in ranking its PR candidates anyway. Using clumps of equally ranked dual candidates enables parties to bypass factional squabbling over individual rankings and to delegate a very unpleasant task to the party rank-and-file. It remains to be seen whether this rule will perpetuate weak parties, by allowing them to prepare PR lists without overcoming factional infighting, or will enable weak parties to grow stronger, by depriving factions of an important *raison d'être*. Although a party opting for blocks of equally ranked dual candidates abdicates the final decision to anonymous voters—who do not even cast their votes with this consequence in mind—it simultaneously substitutes real election results for the party's attempt to predict the results in advance. Finally, the energetic local campaigning by dual candidates, including those who want to rise within their cohort of equally ranked competitors, also helps parties maintain a strong competitive position within these SMDs.

For the most part, then, the unique attributes of the Japanese dual candidacy rule create a mutual interest between candidates and their central party organizations in maintaining a strong presence in the SMDs. However, the candidates and parties will differ over whether that local presence in SMDs emphasizes the link to candidate or to party. During the present time when individual politicians are constantly experimenting with new party affiliations, candidates will be inclined to curry favor with voters in the SMD rather than with party offices, and thus to build a personal base in the SMD that is independent enough to take with them into a new party, whereas parties will want SMD bases that lock strong candidates into the party as insurance against their defection to other parties. Although some observers consider dual candidacy to be a transitional feature of the new system that will soon disappear, we believe that it will continue because the many benefits for both candidates and parties outweigh the slight tension between them over ranking decisions and whether local support is really attached to candidates or to party organizations.

The dual candidacy rules in Japan have additional significance for party democracy. The ranking-by-voters rule, which shifts the ranking and thus the actual choice of winner from party officers to SMD voters, could be said to enhance the quality of democratic representation in Japan. This ranking-by-voters rule also permits voters whose preferred candidate lost in the SMD to be represented after all, by having their preferred candidate take a PR seat. Thus this rule offers a corrective for “majority tyranny” within SMDs and in the House of Representatives as a whole. It could even be argued that by broadening representation—giving both winning voters and most of the losing voters in an SMD their preferred representative in parliament—this arrangement expands the number of satisfied voters and reduces the number of voters who remain truly unrepresented and justifiably disgruntled.

Similarly, giving a local base to PR seat-holders who win in this way gives more voters a representative who is definitely “theirs,” as opposed to PR representatives whose ties to place are much more tenuous. This in turn creates local accountability for PR seat-holders; one would think that voters would prefer having representatives who have to work to please their constituents rather than anonymous parliamentarians who represent a region but nobody in particular. Finally, one could even argue that this rule honors traditional Japanese norms of social choice, which value decisions made unanimously or by supermajorities to those made by simple majorities. Ideally the traditional norm of a unanimity decision rule in Japanese groups is meant to give disgruntled minorities an opportunity to prevent a group decision until they have been adequately considered (though, of course, unanimity may actually mask supermajority tyranny and coercion).

So why are Japanese voters upset now about dual candidacies and PR rankings by SMD votes? There are both simple and sophisticated arguments against the rules for dual candidacy. (1) It looks as though the system provides a way for losers to escape defeat and win anyway. (2) It looks as though voters can’t get rid of politicians they don’t want. (3) And, most important, it turns PR candidates into locally-based politicians, effectively defeating the purpose of creating a PR segment in parliament. First, many are focussing entirely on the fact that SMD losers are winning seats and neglecting the fact that the new parliamentary structure assigns only 60%, not 100%, of the task of representing voters to the SMD winners. There are supposed to be 200 PR representatives in addition to do the remaining 40% of the representing. The complainers are forgetting that the SMD losers represent parties that are entitled, on the basis of the regional PR vote, to the PR seats that these SMD losers fill. In the absence of the mechanism by which SMD losers occupy these seats, other members of those parties would still take those PR seats. Nonetheless, voters who thought that they had effectively defeated the losers in SMDs are distressed to find that they are stuck with these particular individuals anyway!

Second, voters are even more distressed if the SMD losers they get stuck with as PR winners finished not second but third or fourth (or, in one instance, fifth!) in the SMD race. This can happen to dual candidates whether the party assigned them a rank on the PR list or not. If the party assigned a dual candidate a high rank on the PR list and wins at least that many seats, that candidate wins a PR seat regardless of performance in the SMD—indeed, such a candidate need not have run at all in an SMD. But voters who see only the results and do not compare them to original party PR rankings will not realize that for such a candidate, the SMD performance, good or bad, was irrelevant. Voters will only know that this candidate did very badly in the SMD and won a PR seat anyway.

The Japanese ranking formula for candidates in evenly ranked blocks can produce perverse disparities among dual candidates from different parties running in the same SMD. What is a lousy performance for a candidate from a big party may be a sterling performance for a candidate from a small party. Theoretically, in an SMD-PR system using this rule (in which SMD vote ratios determine rankings among PR candidates in the same cohort) with just two parties, the SMD-losing duals grouped into same-rank clumps would indeed consist of many near-winners, with high “scores”, in both

Table 5
PR seat-winners and average SMD vote ratios for victorious dual candidates

Victorious dual candidates (ratios shown for PRsmd winners only)					
	2nd place finishers	3rd place finishers	4th place finishers	5th place finishers	Total victorious dual candidates
LDP ratio	89.69	87.67	na	na	89.55
# needed SMD	27	2	0	0	29
# didn't need	3	0	0	0	3
NFP ratio	76.27	na	na	na	76.27
# needed SMD	1	0	0	0	1
# didn't need	1	0	0	0	1
DPJ ratio	79.86	67.41	na	na	75.33
# needed SMD	14	8	0	0	22
# didn't need	1	1	1	0	3
SDP ratio	57.67	46.88	24.89	na	49.90
# needed SMD	4	2	1	0	7
# didn't need	0	0	1	1	2
JCP ratio	na	na	na	na	na
# needed SMD	0	0	0	0	0
# didn't need	5	9	2	0	16
Total ratio	83.63	67.36	24.89	na	79.32
# needed SMD	46	12	1	0	59
# didn't need	10	10	4	1	25
Total dual candidates	56	22	5	1	84

parties. However, in a SMD-PR system using this rule that has more than two parties (highly likely because the PR component encourages small parties to persist), dual candidates from small parties who are third- or fourth-place finishers in the SMD can conceivably win PR seats. Some of the highest-ranking SMD losers belonging to a small party are people who lost resoundingly in their SMD compared to the SMD losers from the two larger parties.

In the 1996 election in Japan, all parties other than the NFP made heavy use of dual candidacies. Table 5 displays the SMD performance, by party, of the dual candidates who won PR seats in October 1996. Eighty-four of the 200 PR seats went to dual candidates, but 25 of these (30%) actually won their PR seats because of the ranking their parties had already assigned to them on the party PR lists. Although they ran in SMDs—and did badly for the most part—their acquisition of a seat had nothing to do with their SMD performance, and these 25 dual candidates would have won their PR seats without being dual candidates at all. Only 59 of the 84 successful dual candidates in Japan actually won their PR seats by losing SMD seats. Forty-six of these 59 came in second in their SMDs (with an average of 83.63% as many votes as the people who won the SMD seats in question), twelve of them came in third (with an average of 67.36%

of the SMD winner's vote total) and one actually ran fourth place (with a measly 24.89% of the SMD winner's vote total) in their SMDs. Moreover, some of these thirteen third- and fourth-place finishers who won PR seats because of their SMD performance necessarily came in behind SMD losers from larger parties who were also dual candidates running in the regional PR block, but whose much higher vote totals (and therefore their SMD-vote-based PR ranking scores) were not high enough in their party's dual-candidate pile-up to win them PR seats. Only 6 of the 84 dual candidates who won PR seats finished in fourth (5 people) or fifth (1 person) place in their SMDs, and five of them (four of the fourth-place finishers along with the lone fifth-place finisher) actually won their PR seats because of their party-assigned ranking on the pre-election PR list. Only one of these six people actually won his PR seat because of his SMD performance.⁴

Angry voters looked at vote totals and ratios and forgot that they are not used to rank dual candidates across parties within districts, but only within parties and across districts within the same PR block. Only the most careful (or, as in our case, perverse) observers take the trouble to figure out whether a dual candidate who wins a PR seat does so because of or regardless of his SMD performance. The logical implication of voters' anger about SMD losers winning PR seats is that they would prefer for parties winning PR seats to fill those seats with candidates who never faced the voters directly in SMD campaigns at all. But these voters probably have not considered the fact that any PR system needs some way to determine which warm bodies will occupy the PR seats that parties win in PR elections, and that this mechanism will either select persons known to the voters or persons unknown to them! If they understood the need for such a mechanism, they might well prefer one that assigns candidates they know to these PR seats.

Third, a final and fairly sophisticated objection to dual candidacies is that the very features that might be labeled democratic about this arrangement actually undercut the ostensible objective of having 200 PR seats. Voters and pundits alike hoped that PR would strengthen parties, produce an emphasis on issues in both elections and legislators' performance, and limit the number of legislators with strong local ties (those that incline legislators to bring home pork and to generate private goods rather than public goods) to the 300 who officially represent SMDs. This system will undoubtedly reduce the type of intra-party rivalry that existed under SNTV and drove candidates to compete heavily with pork and personal support organization. Yet, by giving many PR seat-holders a local base, the ranking-by-local-voters rule works to increase the total quantity of SMD-style representation, and undercuts the premises on which creation of a PR component was supposedly based. The rules governing dual candidacy in Japan are tantamount to preference voting and magnify the dominance of personalistic campaigning and voting over the PR component in parliament

⁴ For more details on these "special" cases of dual candidates who won PR seats on the basis of a losing SMD performance that was poor relative to other SMD losers in their district, see McKean and Scheiner (1997).

(see Carey and Shugart, 1995; McKean and Scheiner, 1998b). In effect, then, the combination of dual candidacy and the ranking mechanism has created 359 single-member representatives in the new Japanese House of Representatives, and only 141 PR candidates who were chosen entirely by PR votes.⁵ If parties come to rely on dual candidacy and SMD-based rankings more heavily, it would be theoretically possible for all 500 seats in the House of Representatives to be filled by persons who campaigned principally in the SMDs and who were identified and placed there on the basis of votes cast in the SMDs.

This may have been the LDP's hope in the first place: an all-SMD system masquerading as SMD-PR. But there is one crucial insidious difference. At the theoretical extreme, the application of Duverger's law to an all-SMD system with 500 seats would generate 1,000 candidates in each election, consisting of 500 incumbents and 500 challengers. An all-SMD system offers the voters a candidate-to-seats ratio of 2 to 1, an incumbent and a challenger facing each other in every district, and thus the theoretical and logistical possibility that voters might throw out all the rascals at once by electing all the challengers. However, the application of Duverger's law to Japan's SMD-PR system with dual candidacies would generate only 600 candidates for those same 500 seats, consisting of 500 incumbents and 100 challengers. That is, there would be 2 candidates for each of the 300 SMD seats, and all would run as dual candidates on PR lists as well, as Reed (1995) posits. In 200 districts, both candidates would be incumbents—one the holder of the SMD seat and the other from the PR block. Because there would only be 500 incumbents to go around at any given moment, in the other 100 SMDs the voters would be able to choose between an incumbent and a challenger (some of whom would be returnees, or "former" incumbents, anyway). Elections would simply be mechanisms to determine which 500 of these 600 candidates win seats (i.e., which 100 lose), to allocate 300 SMDs to the SMD winners, and to allocate 200 PR seats to the top 200 SMD losers ("top" being evaluated within parties, not across parties). In this extreme case, voters could not throw out all the rascals even if they wanted to. They could replace only 100 rascals at a time, and even that would take a massive act of coordination (to guarantee that all 100 losers are incumbents). At a minimum, as many as 400 incumbents could stay in office. Moreover, parties that take full advantage of dual candidacy will enlarge their roster of candidates simply by padding the bottom of their PR list (with unknowns and loyal staffers), not by putting fresh faces into the SMD races. In fact, even in extreme hypothetical scenarios, those in which voters, SMDs, and the ruling party itself flip-flop dramatically from one election to the next, thanks to dual candidacy very few incumbents would face challengers who were not also

⁵ "2-hyô zukai baransu," in *Nihon keizai shimbun* (22 October 1996), suggests that Japan now has 384 "local" representatives affiliated with single member districts, consisting of the 300 winners of SMDs and the 84 dual candidates who ran in SMDs and won PR seats. But this presentation fails to distinguish between dual candidates who won PR seats without having needed to be SMD candidates, and PR candidates who won seats because of their SMD performance.

incumbents, and incumbents and former incumbents combined would continue to win seats at rates exceeding 80%.⁶

There is an eerie similarity between the ratio of 600 candidates to 500 seats, or 1.2, that we would calculate as the equilibrium “target” for the new SMD-PR system in Japan and the ratio of (511+129) candidates to 511 seats, or 1.25, that Duverger’s law would predict for the old MMD/SNTV system in Japan (Reed, 1990). It would be ironic indeed if Japan’s new electoral system has managed to preserve some of the worst features of the old system (low competition and low incumbent turnover) while undercutting the ostensible advantages of introducing proportional representation (with a dual candidacy feature that may turn every legislator, including those in the PR segment of the HR, into an SMD representative at heart). Table 6 shows how candidate-to-seat ratios declined over time under the old system, indicating that parties and candidates learned to optimize under this system. Scholars generally agree that it takes two or three elections after a new electoral system is launched for equilibrium (stable expectations and strategies by both politicians and voters) to arrive before we can see the anticipated changes in campaigning (both rhetoric and organization), policymaking, and political parties (see Christensen, 1996; Cox and Niou, 1994; Filippov and Shvetsova, 1995; Filippov et al., 1997; Reed 1990, 1995). Thus the 1996 election may, like the 1947–1949 elections under the old system, simply be initial experiments, and a sharp fall in the number of candidates may occur over the next few elections. It is interesting to note that in the 1947 election that launched postwar MMD/SNTV in Japan, also a time of great confusion and ideological competition that brought many new parties and candidates out of the woodwork, the candidate-to-seat ratio was 3.4, and that this fell to 1.7 under LDP one-party

⁶ We envisioned one extreme scenario that begins with two parties, A and B, each holding half of the SMD seats and half of the PR seats, and volatile voter sentiment that causes both parties to prepare for the next election (#1) as if it might receive 60% of the votes in every district and in the PR segment. Thus in election #1 the parties run all 500 incumbents as duals, along with an additional 120 pure PR candidates each as padding, just in case they do that well. In election #1, 60% of our imaginary voters across the country choose party A, so party A wins 60% of the PR seats and 100% of the SMD seats. Then in election #2 we assume much switching to party B, and voters now give 60% of the vote, 60% of the PR seats, and 100% of the SMDs to party B. We also assume that in both elections, parties A and B resolutely nominate all the incumbents (and all the “former” candidates who had been incumbents until the previous election) available to them for these two elections, rank their duals on the PR list above their pure-PR padding, and maintain such high expectations of victory that they both run 120 PR candidates in the expectation of winning 60% of the PR vote. Thus in election #1, 840 candidates (including all 500 incumbents) vie for 500 seats (a candidate-to-seat ratio of 1.68), and 330 incumbents win seats (only 66% of the incumbent candidates win seats and 66% of the seats are occupied by incumbents). In election #2, which involves complete turnover in all the SMDs, we again have a total of 840 candidates and a candidate-to-seat ratio of 1.68, but only 90 of these 840 candidates are new faces—the rest are all incumbents or former incumbents. This time, even with control of government shifting to party B, the winners consist of 160 incumbents and 250 former holders of SMDs for a total of 410 old faces and only 90 new faces. Thus after two elections in which our hypothetical voters shift more dramatically than real voters usually do, government changes hands twice, and all the SMDs switch from one party to the other, the dual candidacy linkage between SMDs and PR keeps the candidate-to-seat ratio under 2 and the old-face survival rate at 82%.

Table 6
Narrowing of choice among candidates over time^a

	Total candidates	Seats available	Candidate/seat ratio
MMD/SNTV 1947	1567	466	3.3627
1949	1364	466	2.9270
1952	1242	466	2.6652
1953	1027	466	2.2039
1955	1017	466	2.1824
1958	951	467	2.0364
1960	940	467	2.0128
1963	917	467	1.9636
1967	917	486	1.8868
1969	945	486	1.9444
1972	895	491	1.8228
1976	899	511	1.7593
1979	891	511	1.7436
1980	835	511	1.6341
1983	848	511	1.6595
1986	838	512	1.6367
1990	953	512	1.8613
1993	955	511	1.8689
SMD-PR mixed 1996	1503	500	3.0060

^a Sources: Curtis (1988) for 1947–1986; *Kahoku shimpô* 20 February 1990; *Asahi shimbun* 19 July 1993 (evening); *Japan Times* 17 July 1993; *Nihon keizai shimbun* 22 October 1996.

dominance. The 1996 HR candidates-to-seats ratio was 3, and we should expect to see this fall over the next couple of elections also.

However, this comparison of hypothetical extremes and this dismal prediction for the Japanese system hinge on three very unrealistic premises. First, an electoral system does not operate as if it is in equilibrium when it is not in equilibrium! When voters are angry enough to consider throwing out some or all of the rascals, more challengers make themselves available, whatever the electoral system. Second, just as there are built-in advantages for incumbents in the Japanese system, so there are in any all-SMD system that emphasizes the personal vote as well. Just because it is theoretically possible, even by accident, to throw all the rascals out in an all-SMD system does not mean that it is likely to happen. Third, the PR segment of the election makes it possible for parties that cannot run in first or second place in SMDs to win PR seats, and thus is likely to produce a steady, if small, flow of fresh faces and electoral experiments for Japanese voters to evaluate. Split-ticket voting in the Japanese SMD-PR system is a reality (see McKean and Scheiner, 1998a). The crucial intervening elements here are the number of parties trying to offer substantial slates of candidates, the built-in institutional advantages for incumbency, and the ability of challengers and voters to organize and coordinate their strategies to overcome those institutional obstacles and instead to produce victories for challengers.

3.1. *The number of political parties*

In Japan's new SMD-PR system we have two reasons to expect more than two parties to remain significant players, probably three significant parties plus the JCP. First, the PR system does guarantee survival for small parties, even those that cannot win many SMDs at all. Second, the ideological spectrum in Japan makes it unlikely for two large parties to be capable of subsuming all voter sentiment. We can expect considerable repositioning and realigning as the LDP, NFP, DPJ, CGP, as well as the Sakigake and JSP/SDP remnants, rearrange and rename themselves (perhaps with more imagination and fresh vocabulary). For some time to come, we expect to see three conservative-to-centrist parties (probably the LDP, a challenger party composed in part of defectors from the LDP, and a more liberal and urban party),⁷ though we cannot be sure what the relative sizes of these three entities or the ideological distribution will be.⁸ Finally, even though the JCP will find it difficult, though not necessarily impossible, to continue putting a candidate in every SMD (there are 300 compared to the 129 MMDs in the old system), we expect the JCP to continue filling an important niche in the Japanese ideological spectrum because it has evolved into the watchdog party representing cleanliness, defending civil liberties, and advocating a fuller acceptance of responsibility for World War II. Until the larger moderate parties co-opt these positions in a convincing way, the JCP will have a place in Japanese politics. As Frances Rosenbluth has suggested (SSJ, 1997), it will take a greater crisis than we have seen yet to produce one major cleavage that would group parties and voters into just two clusters.

The number of parties placing candidates in SMDs will work in concert with dual candidacy to determine the total number of candidates who stand for the HR (see Table 7). As the number of parties drops, and as reliance on dual candidacy to reduce costs and risks rises, the number of candidates standing for all 500 HR seats will fall dramatically from the 1503 who stood in 1996, reducing the choices available to Japanese voters. We expect that many SMDs will be contested by 3 candidates who will consist of an incumbent SMD seat-holder, an incumbent PR seat-holder, and a challenger, all of whom may run as dual candidates. We believe that as the number of candidates per SMD declines, dual candidacy will become more, not less, palatable to voters because candidates who win PR seats based on a losing SMD performance will have lost "well" as second, or at worst third, finishers. Ironically, there is a good chance the voters will feel better served by having PR duals who

⁷ Similarly, Mair and Sakano (1998) expect a multiparty system with a dominant conservative party—probably the LDP—to continue.

⁸ Given the presence of SMDs, it is theoretically possible that with a moderate drop in support, the LDP would lose most of its SMDs. But this is highly unlikely if there remain three biggish parties—the LDP could still win 1/4 to 1/3 of them if the competition were divided (as it would definitely be in an angry year), maybe even half if it remained better coordinated than its conservative rivals. The LDP or some single conservative party could still remain the largest party, or the party with the strongest set of local support organizations, at 30% popularity overall. The fact that the system is likely to remain a 3 or 4 party system is going to let the biggest party win even though the winning margin will be smaller than the winning party has to have in a 2 party system.

Table 7
Projecting future candidate-to-seat ratios

Number of parties that evolves	4: 2 big, 2 small ^a	3: 2 big, 1 small	2: 2 big
Serious candidates put up by each party in SMDs	300+300+150+150	300+300+150	300+300
Number of serious candidates in the SMDs	900	750	600
Candidate-to-seat ratio in the SMDs only	3.00	2.50	2.00
Assumed portion of PR candidates who run as duals	0%	0%	0%
Resulting frequency of pure PR candidacy	100%	100%	100%
Total number of candidates in SMD and PR combined	1000	950	800
Candidate-to-seat ratio in SMDs and PR combined	2.20	1.70	1.60
Maximum number of incumbent candidates (500) who can run, as a percentage of all candidates	45%	53%	63%
		59%	71%
		67%	83%
		750	600
		2.50	2.00
		100%	50%
		0%	0%
		100%	100%
		850	700
		1.80	1.40
		56%	83%

^a Big parties are defined as those that try to place a candidate in every SMD. Small parties are defined as those that can place serious candidates in at most half of the SMDs.

lose well taking the PR seats, even though the use of dual candidacy also means they will have fewer and fewer candidates in all to choose amongst! For this reason as well as those connected with party and candidate interests that were mentioned above, we also expect parties to be able to use dual candidacy more, not less, in the future, even though it is controversial now. Therefore, we expect continuing movement toward the projections in Table 7, to reduce the total number of candidates to 900 (3 per SMD and 1.8 per HR seat) and on down to toward 600 (2 per SMD and 1.2 per HR seat). Leonard Schoppa (SSJ, 1997) expects the number of serious candidates per SMD to drop toward 2.75, and Steven Reed (SSJ, 1997) expects it to drop further toward 2.0, perhaps leveling off at 2.4, but these predictions overlook the effect of dual candidacy shown Table 7. If politicians continue to make lavish use of dual candidacy to reduce risk, then they will populate the 200 PR seats with SMD losers, and the effective ratio of candidates to seats will fall further, toward 1.8 or even 1.2, as we have just outlined. Thus Japanese voters will face slimmer choices and even slimmer opportunities to elect new-face challengers rather than incumbents. An increasing proportion of the candidates on offer will already be office-holding incumbents who occasionally trade SMD and PR seats with each other.

3.2. *Incumbency advantage*

HR members in Japan over the last thirty-plus years have clearly benefitted from their positions as incumbents and have amassed a significant advantage in Lower House elections (Hayama, 1992). This is accentuated by the personal vote, which is itself a response to the old MMD/SNTV electoral system. In Japanese HR races, an average of 80.37% of all incumbents won re-election between 1958 and 1990, with little variation from this average (the standard deviation is only 2.84%) from year to year.⁹ Whether we measure incumbency advantage as the percentage of incumbent candidates running who win seats or the percentage of winning candidates who are incumbents (compared to the same percentage for new faces or returnees), the average percentages on both of these measures are very high and stable (see McKean and Scheiner, 1997). Incumbents fared somewhat less well in 1993 and 1996, when Japanese voters were said to be furious with what they saw as the corrupt political

⁹ The incumbency advantage in Japan is actually lower than in the United States, where it is often over 90%. However, incumbency return rates in the US may be high because a pure SMD system gives angry voters a clear way to express themselves and thus makes the electoral tea leaves easier for candidates to read. In the US, perhaps more unpopular candidates figure out who they are and retire instead of running again and risking public defeat. Thus the population of American incumbents running again may be pre-filtered, the likeliest losers having removed themselves before the election. In Japan, the lower candidate-to-seat ratio under MMD/SNTV made it very difficult for voters to target a candidate for defeat and encouraged incumbents who would have abandoned politics in the US to run again and often to win again. Thus the population of Japanese incumbent candidates is a larger, less-filtered one.

system. The parties whose incumbents fared best were the JCP and LDP. Table 8 illustrates the electoral advantage held by incumbents who ran as pure SMD, dual, and pure PR candidates. The big losers were incumbents who ran as pure SMD candidates, having to fight hard battles without the insurance of dual candidacy. Dual candidates did as well as incumbents had done in earlier years. The 79.1% of incumbent dual candidates who won captured either an SMD seat (125) or a PR seat (48). But the pure PR incumbents had the best record of all in 1996. Many of them were prestigious members of their parties whose geographical base of support under the old system did not provide them with an obvious support base inside a new SMD, or who were asked to step aside to leave the way clear for another SMD candidate. Parties put many such candidates at the top of the PR list in order to assure these candidates of a seat and to attract PR votes for the party as a whole. The new electoral system seems hardly more open to newcomers than the old one was. In spite of the recent clamor for change, only 26.2% of the 1993 winners and only 23.0% of the 1996 winners were brand new faces, neither incumbents nor returnees—low figures for such tumultuous landmark elections.

3.2.1. *Inheritance of seats*

Because the new system still encourages candidates to develop local support organizations to run SMD or quasi-SMD campaigns, Japanese politicians will continue to be able to preserve the incumbency advantage even in the face of death. It is becoming increasingly routine in Japan for politicians to bequeath their local support organizations and the parliamentary seats to children or to dedicated and capable staff secretaries (Reed, 1995; Ishibashi and Reed, 1992). The insistence of major LDP politicians in 1996 that they run in their SMDs, rather than heading up their party's PR list, reflects how important it is to them that they use the new system to continue cultivating district-based support organizations, not just for themselves but as an heritable asset, just as one would try to keep family wealth of other kinds to bequeath to heirs. In other countries children of politicians often enter politics also, but not necessarily in the same districts and certainly not to the same extent as in Japan. If the long dominance of the conservative party is what makes inheritance of a seat worthwhile to the heirs, then we would expect to see less bequeathing and inheriting of parliamentary seats only if the new SMD-PR system manages to end one-party dominance.¹⁰

3.2.2. *Coordinating choices of challengers*

The problem with the Japanese system is not that challengers will not materialize in times of trouble when voters want them. The trouble is that in both old and new electoral systems in Japan, the challengers are likely to fragment their support, leaving unpopular incumbents, even those abandoned by many voters at once, still cap-

¹⁰ If inheritance were just as common in the other parties, then differential access to benefits for members of the conservative parties could not be the reason so many children of politicians seek political careers.

Table 8
How many incumbents won in 1996?

	Total			Pure SMD			Dual			Pure PR						
	Cands Inc	Win	% of Inc who won	Cands Inc	Win	% of Inc who won	Cands Inc	Win	% of Inc who won	Cands Inc	Win	% of Inc who won				
LDP	355	197	176	89.3%	28	24	20	83.3%	260	137	124	90.5%	67	36	32	88.9%
NFP	361	158	111	70.3%	228	111	69	62.2%	7	4	2	50.0%	126	43	40	93.0%
DPJ	161	49	30	61.2%	2	0	0	na	141	45	26	57.8%	18	4	4	100.0%
JCP	321	15	14	93.3%	268	0	0	na	31	9	8	88.9%	22	6	6	100.0%
SDP	48	14	11	78.6%	0	0	0	na	43	14	11	78.6%	5	0	0	na
Sakigake	15	9	2	22.2%	4	4	1	25.0%	9	5	1	20.0%	2	0	0	na
NSP	39	2	0	0.0%	13	0	0	na	24	2	0	0.0%	2	0	0	na
Lib League	88	2	0	0.0%	38	0	0	na	50	2	0	0.0%	0	0	0	na
Dem Reform	2	2	1	50.0%	1	1	0	na	1	1	1	100.0%	0	0	0	na
Other	28	0	0	0.0%	28	0	0	na	0	0	0	na	0	0	0	na
Indep	85	7	4	57.1%	85	7	4	57.1%	0	0	0	na	0	0	0	na
Total	1503	455	349	76.7%	695	147	94	63.9%	566	219	173	79.0%	0	0	0	92.1%

able of winning the plurality of the SMD vote and therefore winning a seat. Extreme fragmentation of the vote across a huge field of challengers happened often with the old MMD/SNTV electoral system. The most extreme recent examples of fragmentation recently occurred not in the HR but in the HC election of 1995, when two dozen parties, including several so new they hardly had time to advertise their platforms, offered PR lists in the national constituency.¹¹ Similarly, dozens of aspiring politicians ran as candidates in the prefectural MMDs containing large cities full of angry voters: 72 candidates ran for 4 seats in Tokyo Prefecture, 52 candidates ran for the 3 seats representing Osaka Prefecture, and 49 candidates ran for the 3 seats in Aichi Prefecture (which contains Nagoya). In each of these, the number of serious candidates (i.e., candidates that voters took seriously and voted for in large numbers) was quite large, producing a broad distribution of the vote across candidates that enabled the winners to win seats with far fewer votes than would have been possible under normal conditions. Although new faces actually won these hotly contested seats in Tokyo, Osaka, and Aichi in HC 95, the vote-spreading problem created great uncertainty for all. Admittedly, vote-spreading will reduce the threshold of votes necessary for anyone to win, either incumbent or challenger. However, it is difficult to channel these votes away from the incumbent toward any particular challenger in a concentrated fashion, so vote-spreading actually increases the uncertainty (even the randomness) of the outcome. To improve their chances of winning, challengers would need to form cartels to agree to restrict entry, and voters would need to conspire with each other to concentrate their protest votes and anti-incumbent votes on a very small number of the challengers. Otherwise, districts where voters want to get rid of incumbents may find themselves spreading anti-incumbent votes too thinly among the challengers, enabling even a very unpopular incumbent capable of winning one of the seats, even if only barely.

4. Conclusion

After the electoral reform of early 1994, hopes ran relatively high among many voters and pundits, if not on the possibility of changing to a new governing party then certainly on a new electoral system that would create policy-oriented parties in a more competitive party system. In many ways, such high hopes make sense: SMD certainly makes two-party competition more likely. The 1996 election bore this out: two parties—the LDP and NFP—dominated the SMD competition, winning 88% of the SMD seats. At the same time, the PR component of the system made it unlikely for large parties to completely dominate the system: parties other than the LDP and NFP received 35% of the PR seats.

¹¹ The new parties in HC 95 included the Refreshing, Restoration, Remake the World, Pure Spirit, Education, Welfare, Japan Drivers, Sports (often confused with the Peace and Citizens' Party, whose leader was a famous baseball hero), New Liberal (not to be confused with the old New Liberal Club of 1976!), and Young Liberal Parties. Others from the past include the Taxpayers' Party, the Pink Collar Party, and the memorable UFO Party, which favors intergalactic peace.

We do see a few still-untested possibilities for the recent electoral reforms to make substantive changes in the future. First, they increase the chance of turnover in which party controls government. Second, parties did conduct media-based campaigns for their PR lists, an innovation that could increase policy-focussed campaigning, but it certainly remains to be seen whether these will matter any more than the party posters with balloons and smiling children, pasted on every telephone pole, of the past. More significant is that the new system gives the parties a tighter lock on the nomination process: party endorsement is vital to a serious PR candidacy, and the prospect of a successful independent candidacy in the SMDs is lower than in the past. It is also highly likely that local organization and local politics will have more influence than in the past on identifying the appropriate candidates for parties to choose. But whether this will increase or decrease responsiveness of parties to voter sentiment remains to be seen. Parties anxious to distance themselves from tainted candidates could screen them out at the nomination stage and offer more fresh faces to voters. On the other hand, the fact that the tainted candidates could get elected if nominated because of a low candidate-to-seat ratio overall may mean that parties may not take the trouble to reject them. Only time will tell.

More important, however, the new system has peculiar features that directly contradict what was promised to the voters and that will actually produce effects like those of the old system. Heavy use of dual candidacies, the domination of candidate pools by incumbents, and low candidate-to-seat ratios mean that in many districts there will be two winners out of two or three candidates (sometimes three winners out of three or four candidates). Thus we have the full irony of the new system: although in a formal sense Japan has a SMD-PR system, the dual candidacy rule has the potential (1) to convert all PR seats into nearly-SMD seats in terms of the effect on campaigning, candidate appeals, voter perception of candidate, and behavior in parliament, and (2) to convert most SMDs into nearly-MMD districts. If dual candidacies are fully used, then, Japan's electoral system will end up offering almost none of the advantages of either PR or SMDs! PR seat-holders will emphasize personal service and private pork over national concerns in both campaigning and actual legislative action, so voters will lose the ability to obtain the public goods (national-level thinking) they wanted (see also Gallagher, 1998). SMDs will behave as if they were MMDs in terms of restricting candidate-to-seat ratios and the voters' ability to toss the rascals out. The electoral system makes it very possible and even likely—if the parties play their cards right—that competition in SMDs will produce winners who gain the local seat and losers (up to 200 of them) who merely enter the Diet through the PR route instead.

In the meantime, we fear that dual candidacy, personal vote, incumbency advantage, and the continuing value of personal support organizations that create an incentive to bequeath and inherit supporters and parliamentary seats will operate to create permanent employment for an elite segment of Japan's politicians. Candidate pools overwhelmed by incumbent politicians will make it very hard for voters to inject new blood into the system. The MMD/SNTV system made it hard to vote out the rascals; the new SMD-PR system may even make it harder. Even if Japan does not continue to have a dominant party and moves toward two-party competition, it will

certainly be run by a dominant core of politicians. Japanese voters have been burdened with an electoral system that will make it extremely difficult, whether by lucky accident or determined purpose, to toss the rascals out. There are, of course, normative reasons to be concerned by this. As T.J. Pempel points out, “a democracy predicated on the ability to ‘throw the rascals out’ is far less convincing when it exists only in the abstract than when it is backed up by periodic examples of rascals actually flying through the doors” (Pempel, 1990, 7). We may have to wait for another round of reform, or a political crisis far worse than anything we have yet seen, before Japanese voters successfully manage to get rid of very many of the rascals they actually disapprove of.

5. Sources of electoral data

Candidate lists, election coverage, and some 1996 HR election results from *Asahi shimbun* world-wide web pages (<http://www.asahi.com/senkyo/koji/index.html> and <http://www.asahi.com/senkyo/result/index.html>).

House of Councillors election results (July 1995) from NHK broadcasts (taped) in July 1995.

House of Representatives election results (October 1996) election results from *Asahi shimbun*, *Nihon keizai shimbun*, and *Yomiuri shimbun*, 22–23 October 1996.

Acknowledgements

This paper was originally presented at the Conference on Democratic Institutions in East Asia, Duke University, 8–9 November 1996. We gratefully acknowledge comments and suggestions from Kisuk Cho, Gary Cox, David Epstein, Junko Katô, Sadafumi Kawato, Herbert Kitschelt, Steve Reed, Len Schoppa, Michael Thies, and Rob Weiner, as well as from two anonymous reviewers. We also benefitted from postings on the Social Science Japan electronic listserve from Steve Reed, Frances Rosenbluth, and Len Schoppa during July and August 1997.

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