

Competition for Power: Party Switching as a Means for Changing Party Systems in Japan

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ABSTRACT

Since 1993, Japan has experienced party breakups, mergers and the formation of new parties that are rare in industrial democracies. As a result, the one-party dominance by the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), with perennial opposition parties, has evolved into a LDP-centered governing coalition faced with the Democratic Party (DP) contending with it for office. While an electoral system change took place at the same time, party switching by legislators has led to a changing balance of power among parties, especially between the LDP and the DP. Especially since 1996, when the first election under a new electoral system took place, both the LDP and the DP have continued to attract switchers from other smaller parties and to increase their size. The LDP's size has exceeded the threshold for a majority, but the party has not been able to attract a sufficient number of party switchers to achieve a majority that would enable it to pass legislation without allying with other parties. In contrast, the DP has become even more challenging to the LDP. The paper argues that party switchers have different prospects for future party systems. More specifically, switchers to the LDP believe that the LDP will restore one-party dominance to office. The switchers to the DP count on the DP's advantage as a centrist party at the expense of the conservative LDP. The paper demonstrates the possibility that legislators may decide to switch, based on different assumptions of party competition, that is, office-seeking and policy-seeking when the power balance of parties is susceptible to changes.

INTRODUCTION

Legislators decide to change their party affiliation based on electoral, office, and policy considerations. Electoral, office, and policy payoffs to individuals hinge on the existing electoral system, the party system, and the dynamics of party competition. Thus, institutional changes relating to electoral rule and party politics inevitably influence the switching of parties. At the same time, however, party switching may cause and/or facilitate a systemic change by forming a new, winning coalition and changing party systems. Party switching is therefore a means for changing the dynamics of party competition and thus, ultimately, party systems.

A small number of works in the existing literature pay special attention to the dynamic changes caused by party switching. Laver and Kato (2001) analyze the recent Japanese case in which party switching took place among many legislators and thus led to party breakups, mergers, and the formation of new parties. Based on the Japanese case in which the LDP restored its bare majority between 1996 and 1999, the analysis demonstrates an important implication for inter-electoral changes in party systems. That is, large parties (beyond a certain size threshold) are able to offer benefits and payoffs to prospective defectors from other parties. They can subsequently increase their size by accepting defectors until they pass a threshold for winning a majority between elections. Laver and Benoit (2003) further generalize a theoretical implication of Laver and Kato (2001) and explore the inter-electoral evolution of party systems in which the largest parties play a key role. They focus on a “dominant” party that has a free hand in joining either of mutually exclusive winning coalitions as a dominant player in party coalition games (Peleg 1981; Einy 1985; van Deeman 1989; van Roozendaal 1992) and show, based on computational simulations, that a dominant party attracts switchers and increases its size at the expense of the second largest party.

The literature above is based on an office-seeking assumption to illuminate the importance of party switching as a means to change the dynamics of party competition. In office-seeking models, party size is central for identifying parties that have absolute advantages over other parties. Directly opposite these models are those that are based on one-dimensional, policy-seeking assumptions in which domination in party competitions is associated with a median party that has a median voter in the legislature among its members (McKelvey and Schofield 1986, 1987). It is conventional to apply either of these assumptions to all the individuals in one study. However, this paper considers a case in which individual legislators decide to switch, based on either office-seeking or policy-seeking assumptions. More specifically, it explores a case in which the coexistence of different decision rules facilitates switching to two parties that are considered to dominate a party system that is based on office-seeking and policy-seeking assumptions, respectively.

Recent Japanese party politics provides a suitable case for analyzing legislators' switching behaviors, based on different assumptions about party competition. Since 1993, Japan has experienced party breakups, mergers, and the formation of new parties that are rare in industrial democracies. As a result, the one-party dominance by the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), with perennial opposition parties, has evolved into a LDP-centered governing coalition facing the Democratic Party (DP) that contends with it for office. Although an electoral system change took place at the same time, party switching by legislators has led to a changing balance of power among parties. Especially since 1996, when the first election under a new electoral system took place, both the LDP and the DP have continued to attract switchers from other smaller parties and to increase their size. Although the LDP once secured a bare majority in the House of Representatives, the DP has grown significantly faster than the LDP and has become even more challenging to the LDP. More important, the LDP has been unable to attract a sufficient number of party switchers to achieve a "stable" majority that would allow it to pass legislation in the committee-system of the Diet without allying with other parties.

The paper demonstrates the possibility that legislators may decide to switch, based on different assumptions of party competition, when the power balance of parties is susceptible to changes. More specifically, if legislators rationally switch to a party that will provide more payoffs (from offices), switchers to the LDP believe that the LDP will restore one-party dominance to office. On the other hand, switchers to the DP believe that the DP will be able to challenge the LDP in their quest for office. Thus, party switchers have different prospects for future party systems.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE ANALYSIS OF PARTY SWITCHING

This section will present a theoretical framework for the analysis of party switching as a means for creating party system changes. The analysis focuses specifically on a case in which one can observe party switching on a large and frequent enough scale to lead to a change in the power balance among parties.

The first assumption concerns the incentives of party switchers in general.

A1 *Legislators switch parties to increase their electoral, office (or post), and policy payoffs.*

Although increasing these payoffs may create potentially conflicting goals, legislators prioritize them. Office consideration has the highest priority, especially when they decide to switch parties, expecting that their switch will facilitate a change in the power balance among parties

A2 *The status of incumbency assures advantages in elections, posts, political*

funding, and policymaking among legislators who belong to incumbent parties, and thus legislators tend to change party affiliations if their switching will increase the possibility that their newly-affiliated parties will be incumbent in the future.

In a simple majority rule, securing a majority changes a losing coalition into a winning one. Institutions of a specific parliament, however, may require a winning coalition to secure more seats than a simple majority to make its rule stable. For example, investiture of some posts may require more confidence votes than those of a simple majority, more than majority support may be necessary to pass safely bills in committees as well as on the floor, and so on. A winning threshold that takes institutional constraints into consideration is distinguished as a “stable” majority. Expected payoffs to members will increase until a winning coalition goes beyond the level of a simple majority, secures a stable majority, and makes its rule stable. Thus, if a single party tries to constitute a winning coalition, it will accept switchers until it reaches the threshold of a stable majority.

A3 *If a party wishes to be dominant in a specific legislative institution, it must secure a stable majority that is determined by the institutional constraints of each legislature.*

Office-seeking and policy-seeking models have different theoretical implications for which party will secure incumbent status and thus attract more party switchers. In terms of the office-seeking model, size matters. For example, the largest party cannot be dominant with a majority rule 1) unless it has more than 25% of the seats, and 2) if the second and the third largest parties can form a winning coalition (Laver and Benoit 2003). The advantage for the largest party to attract switchers is more explicit when it is close to achieving a winning threshold of a majority (Laver and Kato 2001). The party’s domination in office, instead of in a coalition with other parties, is expected to drastically increase the size of the pie that is to be divided in pay-offs to legislators affiliated with the party. In a one-dimensional policy space, policy-seeking theorizing shows that the median party has the advantage, although in a multi-dimensional competition, it is often hard to identify the party that dominates the competition.

A4 *Based on office-seeking theorizing, the party that is close to and/or passes a winning threshold is an attractor that absorbs party switchers. Based on policy-seeking theorizing (in party competition in a one-dimensional policy space), legislators tend to switch to a party that is expected to secure the status of a median party.*

Based on the above four assumptions, the paper examines three hypotheses below. If the

power balance among parties is susceptible to change, party switching is expected to be more active. Party switching is expected to lead to equilibrium, that is, to the preponderance of a specific party if more legislators switch to the same party. It is conventional to apply the same behavioral assumption, either of office-seeking or policy-seeking, to individuals in a study. However, in reality, all legislators may not decide to switch based on the same assumption and may have different expectations about the payoffs for switching. Expectations are different between switchers who decide to switch based on an office-seeking assumption and those whose decision is based on a policy-seeking assumption.

H1 *When the power balance among parties is susceptible to changes, party switching is active and there more likely emerges a diversification among switchers. More specifically, some calculate the expected payoffs for switching, based on office-seeking, whereas others do so, based on policy-seeking.*

Obviously, legislators who decide to switch parties based on an office-seeking assumption may switch to a party that is different from the one that is chosen by legislators who decides to switch based on a policy-seeking assumption. Here, they have different views about future party systems, especially about which party will be dominant. Consider a party that is close to a winning threshold of a bare majority and is located between more leftist and more conservative parties in a left-right dimension. In such a situation, a centrist party is expected to secure preponderance, regardless of office-seeking or policy-seeking theorizing that legislators adopt in deciding to switch. The reverse of this implication is: a near-majority party, either on the left or right in an ideological space, may be challenged by a centrist party, if some legislators switch to the centrist party that is expected to be dominant, based on a policy-seeking assumption. Although a near-majority (left or right) party attracts office-seeking legislators, a party at the center attracts policy-seeking party switchers.

H2 *A centrist party is able to challenge a party that is more left or more conservative that is about to pass or manages to pass a winning threshold if a large enough number of legislators decide to switch, based on policy-seeking.*

Thus far, we have focused on party switching as a means to change the power balance among parties, but election is usually more important for changing the power balance. The paper, however, does not exclude from the analysis changes brought by elections. Electoral changes often have an important influence on subsequent party switching.

H3 *Party switching causes a change in the power balance among parties between elections. Therefore, switching changes the distribution of seats among parties*

independently of elections. At the same time, however, the latest election result influences party switching until the next election.

Election results are most likely to influence party switching by bringing a change in the distribution of seats that may influence legislators' perception about which party will be "dominant." This consideration of the influence of elections requires us to qualify the impact on party switching on the power balance among parties. The impact of election results is often larger than it appears especially if the election result itself is a reason for facilitating switching from one party to another.

FROM 1996 TO 2003

: RESTORATION OF THE LDP'S ONE-PARTY DOMINANCE OR THE DP'S CHALLENGE

In 1993, the LDP broke up and could not restore the pre-election defections of its members in the general election. It was excluded from a subsequent non-LDP coalition government. The LDP was out of office for the first time in 38 years, but returned after only a year. Since then, LDP-centered, coalition (or minority) governments have continued until 2005. The politicization of electoral reform and the reform of political financial control are critical factors that brought a change in party politics in 1993. Both reforms were enacted in 1994. A medium-sized-district system with a single, non-transferable vote in the House of Representative elections has been replaced by a mixed system that includes a single-member-district and proportional representation. The public funding of party activities has also been enacted. Elections in the new system were first held in 1996; then in 2000 and 2003. Three elections brought changes in the power balance among parties, but party switching caused more changes *between elections*. Both houses of the Diet observed party switching during this period, but the analysis here focuses on the House of Representatives whose members more actively took part in party breakups, mergers, formations, and dissolutions that resulted in party switching on a large scale.

Whether the LDP has regained its one-party dominance is important for observing the direction of changes in the party system. The answer is mixed in the sense that the LDP has restored a bare majority, but has yet to secure the "stable" majority that is necessary to pass bills in the committee system of the Diet. To safely pass bills with a single-party majority, the LDP must secure all the committee chair posts in addition to having a majority of members on each committee. The number that constitutes a "stable" majority in the Diet changes with the number of committees and the allocation of members to them. From 1996 to 2000, a stable majority in the House of Representatives was 265 out of 500 total seats, and, from 2000 to present, after a reduction of total seats, it

has become 254 out of 480.¹

From 1993 to 1999, the LDP, which had lost a stable majority, succeeded in securing a majority and then in restoring a stable majority before the 2000 general elections. A critical juncture was the 1996 election, when the LDP fell short of a majority threshold but won seats close enough to it. Subsequently, the LDP absorbed more party switchers, surpassed a majority threshold, and increased its size to the threshold of a “stable” majority without elections. In the 2000 elections, however, the LDP failed to win a majority of seats, despite a reduction from 500 to 480 in the total number of seats. The LDP restored a bare majority by accepting switchers before the 2003 general election when the party had again fallen short of a majority. The LDP subsequently restored a majority, but its seat share has fallen far short of a stable majority as of 2005. The changes in the LDP’s size after both the 2000 and 2003 general elections, therefore, contrast clearly with the 1996 elections when the LDP easily increased its size to that of a stable majority in only three years.

This period also corresponds to the increase in the DP’s advantage in party competition. Although the DP was formed immediately before the 1996 general elections and absorbed many members from the New Frontier Party (NFP) that was dissolved in 1997, the DP’s share of seats remained a little more than one-third of the LDP’s before the 2000 general elections. However, the DP won seats in the 2000 general elections that were more than 50% of the LDP’s and subsequently increased its number by accepting party switchers. In other words, since 2000, the DP has continued to challenge the LDP while the LDP has maintained a seat share that is almost a bare majority.

<1> From the 1993 general election to the 2000 general election

During the period between the 1993 and 2000 general elections, the number of party switchers the LDP was able to attract hinged critically on the prospective switchers’ expected payoffs in office-seeking. Laver and Kato (2001) developed this argument, based on the Shapley-Shubik power index. This section will summarize the argument about the changing power balance among parties from 1993 to 2000 to contrast it with changes after the 2000 general election that is the focus of this paper. As Table 1 (by merging Tables 2 and 3 in Laver and Kato 2001) shows, the LDP lost a stable majority

¹ . A stable majority satisfies conditions for securing a majority in all standing committees and their chairs. If a party tries to secure a majority in all committees (including special and ad-hoc ones) and their chairs, it has to have a higher level of seat shares (called an “absolute stable majority”). An absolute stable majority meant having 280 out of 500 seats between 1996 and 2000 and 269 out of 480 since 2000. The paper uses the stable majority instead of the absolute stable majority because an expected payoff to each member certainly increases to the size of the stable majority.

because of pre-election defections and failed to restore even a bare majority in the 1993 general election. The Shapley-Shubik power index in Table 1 demonstrates that this first breakup reduced the LDP's expected payoffs much more than was expected from its loss of seats. This is because alternative governing coalitions emerged that excluded the LDP, and the LDP was no longer pivotal in all winning coalitions. From the 1993 to the 1996 general elections, the LDP clearly remained the largest party, but much smaller parties could enjoy disproportionately high levels of payoffs (for example, see the Social Democratic Party's (SDP) payoff in 1995). The level of the LDP's payoffs was disproportional to its largest seat shares and this tendency was fortified by the formation of the NFP at the end of 1994. Upon its formation, the NFP became the second largest party. Its seat share was much closer to the LDP's than the former second largest party (the SDP), and, more important, the NFP could form a winning coalition with the SDP - the third largest party.

The NFP's challenge to the LDP was defeated in the 1996 general election results. The LDP failed to secure a majority but increased the number of its seats much closer to a majority threshold at the expense of the second largest NFP. Thus, its expected office payoff increased on a much larger scale than was expected from an increase in seat share and reduced the expected payoffs of the NFP and other parties. Since then, the LDP has increased its size by absorbing party switchers. It restored its majority without elections in 1997. It even continued to increase its size and reached the threshold of a stable majority, i.e., 265 out of 500, in 1999, only three years after the general elections. Securing a stable majority means achieving domination in office without allying with other parties. Thus, the LDP was expected to drastically increase the size of the pie derived from its incumbent status and to increase the payoffs distributed to LDP legislative members. This reasoning is consistent with the fact that party switching to the LDP continued until it surpassed the threshold of a stable majority.

The restoration of a majority by the LDP during an inter-election period is considered an example in which legislators try to form a winning coalition by crossing the boundaries of parties. Party switching is a means to change the dynamics of party competition. Party switching serves to transform a near-majority party into a majority party, as argued in Laver and Kato (2001). More important, party switching serves to consolidate a majority rule by making the LDP surpass the stable majority threshold. It causes substantial changes in the distribution of power among all Japanese parties.

<1> After the 2000 general election

The LDP again lost a majority in the 2000 general election, but its seat share, 233 out of 480, was close to a majority. The LDP, as a near-majority party, was expected to absorb party switchers as it had done after the 1996 general election. However, Table 2

shows that the LDP did restore a majority but not a stable majority before the 2003 general elections. In the 2003 general elections, it won 237 seats, falling short of a majority. It then restored a bare majority by accepting switchers but has remained far short of a stable majority of 265. More important, unlike the NFP that emerged as the second largest party in 1996 but was dissolved in 1997, the DP that replaced the NFP as the second largest party increased its seats not only in the 2000 and the 2003 general elections, but also accepted party switchers in numbers comparable to those of the LDP. This result contradicts the theoretical implication of the analysis in Laver and Kato (2001) that is based on office-seeking theorizing. In the 2000 general elections, the LDP was closer to a majority threshold than in the 1996 general elections; after the 2000 elections, the DP was less challenging to the LDP than the NFP had been after the 1996 elections. In a nutshell, after the 2000 elections the LDP should have attracted more party switchers than after the 1996 elections. The Shapley-Shubik index of the LDP increased from 0.485 to 0.610, whereas the NFP's declined from 0.165 to 0.093 as a result of the 1996 general elections. As a result of the 2000 general elections, the LDP decreased the power index due to the loss of a majority but still remained at a level of 0.833, whereas the DP increased from 0.000 to 0.033. The expectations of the LDP, expressed by the index, were even higher in 2000 than in 1996, especially in comparison with the second largest parties, the NFP and DP, respectively. However, in reality, the LDP has restored a majority, but its rule has never been stable without a stable majority after the 2000 general elections. The stagnation in the LDP's size is in contrast with the DP's increasing size that resulted from the acceptance of switchers between the 2000 and 2003 general elections. At least, switchers to the DP were not office-seeking in the same way as those to the LDP.

This unexpected consequence is explained by posing an assumption about party switching other than office-seeking. Policy-seeking is a behavioral assumption that is opposite office-seeking. Although party size matters in office-seeking theorizing, the possibility of occupying a median position increases a party's absolute advantage in a one-dimensional, policy-seeking game. Did the DP enjoy such an advantage as a "prospective median" party and absorb party switchers after the 2000 general elections? If so, why did the same not happen to the NFP after the 1996 general elections? To answer these questions, we need to know the Japanese party positions in a left-right ideological dimension.

Figure 1 shows party positions in policy dimensions as well as on a left-right ideological scale, based on the results of expert surveys after the 2003 general elections. Although the DP changed its policy position from a mostly left, center, to a right one, the party occupied the center in a left-right dimension. The NCP, which was located at extreme right, merged into the LDP after the 2003 elections. Therefore, the DP was

expected to occupy a median voter position in the legislature if the LDP (plus the NCP) and the Clean Government Party (CGP) that were on the right of the DP were to fall short of a majority threshold. However, the governing coalition of the LDP (plus the NCP) and the CGP secured a majority in the 2000 general elections and have maintained it since then. Considering that the LDP alone did not always secure a majority during this period, the CGP, rather than the DP, should have absorbed party switchers. Why did the CGP fail to attract party switchers? The reason lies in the CGP's organized support base. The CGP relies heavily for electoral support on a religious organization, the *Soka Gakkai*. Though the party is officially separated from the *Soka Gakkai* legislators affiliated with the CGP inevitably have a close relationship with it, and this certainly makes prospective switchers more reluctant to switch to the CGP.

If the DP enjoyed the position of a prospective median to attract switchers after the 2000 general elections, why did the NFP not enjoy the same advantage in increasing its size after the 1996 elections? Conversely, why did the LDP fail to attract party switchers at the expense of the DP after the 2000 general elections when it had succeeded in enlarging its size to a majority party at the expense of the NFP after the 1996 elections? This difference between the NFP and the DP vis-a-vis the LDP derives from the fact that the DP is more clearly centrist than the NFP when compared with the LDP. The NFP occupied broad policy positions from center to right, but it was rarely regarded as a centrist party. The NFP was formed from parties that had participated in a non-LDP governing coalition, but it excluded the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the New Party Harbinger. Exclusion of the SDP fortified an impression that legislators affiliated with the NFP had policy positions broadly distributed from the conservative to the center but that did not stretch beyond the center. This makes a sharp contrast with the DP which accepted switchers selectively from the SDP, especially the moderately leftist ones. In addition, the ones defected from the LDP were most dominant in the NFP executives: this is again different from the DP in which different intraparty groups switcher from different parties have competed for leadership. These characteristics in composition of party members and in party leadership made the NFP more like the LDP legislators whose policy positions were diversified from conservative to center-to-conservative. The LDP and the NFP were rarely regarded as ideologically different. Thus the NFP failed to attract policy-seeking switchers, and the LDP's advantage as a near-majority party attracted party switchers exclusively after the 1996 elections.

RE-ELECTION OR OFFICE?: AN ANALYSIS OF ELECTORAL CONSIDERATION

In the previous section, the analysis is based on the assumption that incumbent status helps legislators seek other goals and thus is compatible with their reelection. This assumption may not be applied in the Japanese case in which an electoral system change

has occurred simultaneously with extensive and frequent party switching. It is plausible that legislators decide to switch parties exclusively for *individual* electoral consideration, that is, to increase their chances for reelection *independently of* their parties' electoral fortunes. For example, obtaining a nomination as an official party candidate is critical for reelection, and thus legislators may try to affiliate with a party that guarantees this. The House of Representatives members had to adjust to the new election system enacted in 1994, and party switching was active before the general elections in 1996, 2000, and 2003. The importance of party nomination increases in the new mixed system of single-member districts and proportional representation. Unlike the prior medium-sized district system, the newly introduced single-member district (SMD) system allows a party officially to nominate only one candidate in each election district. Proportional representation (PR) with a party list also increases the influence of a party's nomination on the reelection chances of legislators. More important, the mixed system increases a party's leverage in bargaining with candidates about nomination: a party can offer a candidate a nomination in either a single-member district or a proportional-representation district. Legislators may not be satisfied with the party's nomination policy for two reasons. They may not be nominated in the election system that they prefer - whether SMD and PR. Even if they are nominated in the system that they prefer, they may not be nominated in an election district that they desire (in the case of the SMD) or may not be nominated with a high enough ranking on a party list (in the case of the PR). In other words, legislators have incentives to switch to another party that assures them better conditions for nomination.

An alternative explanation for party switching focuses on these electoral incentives for legislators instead of on the legislators' prospects for party system changes. A party that is able to offer to prospective members more desirable conditions for party nomination can attract more switchers: alternatively, legislators put the highest priority on electoral consideration, which constrains their decisions about switching parties. To examine this alternative hypothesis, I will examine the electoral backgrounds of party switchers to the LDP and to the DP.

Between the 1996 and 2000 general elections, the LDP increased its size by accepting switchers, especially from the dissolved NFP. There is a clear tendency that switchers to the LDP changed their election district from single-member districts (SMD) to proportional representation (PR). Table 3 shows that 21 NFP members who had won in single-member districts in the 1996 general elections switched to the LDP before the 2000 general elections when only 10 won again in the same SMDs. Among 11 other switchers, 3 lost in the same SMDs, and 7 ran and won in PR together with 3 switchers who ran in the PR system, both in the 1996 and the 2000 general elections. Seven switched to the LDP from parties other than the NFP, and 6 were allowed to run again in

the same SMDs (among them, only 1 lost in the elections), whereas 1 switched to PR from the SMD. Compared with the case of switchers from the NFP to the DP, switchers to the LDP were more likely to switch from SMDs to PR, whereas switchers to the DP were allowed to run in the same SMDs. Switchers from the NFP to other parties, such as the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party, were similar to those who switched to the DP. In other words, from the 1996 to 2000 general elections when the LDP attracted switchers enough to restore a majority, the party imposed many more restrictions on switchers about the choice of election systems and election districts. This implies that switchers were not encouraged to affiliate with the LDP because of electoral consideration. As Figure 2 shows, the LDP, which had incumbents in more than half of the 300 SMDs, inevitably imposed more restrictions on switchers about the choice of election districts than the DP, which had incumbents in only one-third of the SMDs, even in the 2003 general elections.

Table 4 summarizes switchers from the 2000 to 2003 general elections. In the 2003 general elections, in principle, the DP did not allow candidates to run only in PR, and thus all candidates, including switchers, were forced to run in SMDs.² As a result, 13 switchers from the LP who had won in PR or had survived in PR after losing in SMDs in the 2000 general elections ran in SMDs (and also in PR) in 2003, and 3 won in SMDs, 7 survived in PR after losing in SMDs, and 3 lost in both. In 2003, the DP uniformly required all switchers to run in SMDs. Despite this restriction on the choice of electoral system, the DP attracted switchers between the 2000 and the 2003 general elections.

A comparison of the electoral backgrounds of switchers to the LDP and the DP demonstrates that both parties often made switchers move from SMDs to PR or from PR to SMDs as well as to run in different election districts. Despite these apparently unfavorable conditions, the LDP attracted enough switchers between 1996 and 1999 to restore a majority, and the DP attracted enough switchers after the 2000 general elections to challenge the LDP. This implies that searching for better conditions in party nominations in elections was not a reason for party switching. Instead, as far as switchers to the LDP and the DP were concerned, legislators tended to switch to parties, in spite of the fact that they needed to run under different systems and/or in different districts in newly affiliated parties.

CONCLUSION

Since 1993, there has been large-scale party switching among the Japanese

² . Because the mixed system in Japan allows candidates to run in both SMDs and in PR, the DP policy means that all PR candidates are required to run in SMDs, whereas some candidates are allowed to run only in SMDs.

legislators accompanying breakups, mergers, formations, and dissolutions of parties. During this process, the LDP, after failing to achieve a stable majority in 1993, restored a majority by attracting party switchers between elections. Although the LDP has thus far failed to achieve the stable majority that would enable the party to maintain a stable rule, the DP has begun to challenge the LDP by winning more seats in the elections and attracting switchers between elections. This picture is completely different from one in which observers are concerned about winning the threshold of a bare majority without considering the impact of legislative institutions. As a result, the Japanese legislative institution has observed the head-on competition between the incumbent LDP and the DP. This two-party competition belies the prediction, based on an office-seeking assumption, that a near-majority party will attract switchers at the expense of other parties. The DP's challenge to the LDP implies that switchers to the DP decided to switch based on policy-seeking rather than office-seeking.

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Table 1 Party Seats and Shapley–Shubik Power Index for the House of Representatives parties from July 1993 to October 1999 (= Table 2 in Laver and Kato 2001)

	July 18 1993 election	Aug 9 1993		Apr 28 1994		June 30 1994		Jan 19 1995		Jan 11 1996		Sept 27 1996		Oct 20 1996 election	Jan 20 1997		Sept 29 1997		Apr 27 1998		Jan 19 1999		Oct 29 1999				
Majority	256	256		255		255		254		249		247		251	251		251		251		249		251				
Stable Majority	271	271		271		271		271		271		271		265	265		265		265		265		265				
LDP	223	0.694	228	0.643	206	0.601	206	0.589	208	0.367	209	0.383	206	0.485	239	0.610	240	0.815	250	0.889	261	1.000	265	1.000	265	1.000	
SDP	70	0.058	77	0.071	74	0.090	74	0.091	70	0.283	63	0.266	35	0.118	15	0.092	15	0.039	15	0.014	15	0.000	13	0.000	14	0.000	
Sakigake	13	0.016	17	0.024	15	0.016	22	0.026	21	0.033	22	0.050	14	0.031	2	0.010	2	0.006	2	0.014	2	0.000	2	0.000	2	0.000	
JNP	35	0.059	35	0.071	37	0.068	33	0.049																			
DP													41	0.165	52	0.093	52	0.039	52	0.014	93	0.000	93	0.000	93	0.000	
Sun Peace																10	0.015	10	0.014			47	0.000	52	0.000	52	0.000
JRP	55	0.059	60	0.071	62	0.090	62	0.091																			
Komeito	51	0.059	52	0.071	52	0.090	52	0.091																			
NFP									176	0.283	170	0.266	163	0.165	156	0.093	142	0.039	129	0.014			3	0.000	2	0.000	
Mushozokunokai																		5	0.014								
DSP	15	0.019	19	0.024	19	0.019	19	0.024																			
SDL	4	0.016																									
LP1					7	0.005	7	0.009																			
LP2																					41	0.000	38	0.000	39	0.000	
NF					5	0.004	5	0.006																			
CL											2	0.017															
LC													2	0.002													
NSP													2	0.002													
DRC													3	0.002	3	0.010	3	0.006	3	0.014							
RC					4	0.003	4	0.005																			
CP																											
NCP																											
Indep	30		8		13		10		17		16		12		7		10		8		15	0.000	5	0.000	7	0.000	
JCP	15	0.019	15	0.024	15	0.016	15	0.018	15	0.033	15	0.017	15	0.031	26	0.093	26	0.039	26	0.014	26	0.000	26	0.000	26	0.000	
Vacancy					2		2		4		14		18										3				
Total	511	511		509		509		507		497		493		500	500		500		480		497		500				

Table 2 Party Seats and Shapley-Shubik Power Index for the House of Representatives parties from December 1999 to present

	Dec 28 1999	Apr 7 2000	May 26 2000	June 25 2000 election	July 5 2000	Apr 27 2001	Mar 19 2002	Dec 31 2002	Oct 25 2003	Nov 9 2003 election	Nov 22 2003	Sept 27 2004	Apr 28 2005													
Majority	251	251	250	241	241	241	240	239	238	241	241	240	239													
Stable Majority	<u>265</u>	<u>265</u>	<u>265</u>	254	<u>254</u>	<u>254</u>	<u>254</u>	<u>254</u>	<u>254</u>	254	<u>254</u>	<u>254</u>	<u>254</u>													
LDP	269	1.000	268	1.000	267	1.000	233	0.833	232	0.833	239	0.857	240	1.000	243	1.000	247	1.000	237	0.833	245	1.000	249	1.000	250	1.000
SDP	14	0.000	14	0.000	14	0.000	19	0.033	19	0.033	19	0.024	19	0.000	18	0.000	18	0.000	6	0.033	6	0.000	6	0.000	6	0.000
Sakigake																										
JNP																										
DP	94	0.000	96	0.000	96	0.000	127	0.033	129	0.033	126	0.024	125	0.000	118	0.000	137	0.000	177	0.033	179	0.000	178	0.000	176	0.000
Sun																										
Peace																										
JRP																										
Komeito	48	0.000	48	0.000	48	0.000	31	0.033	31	0.033	31	0.024	31	0.000	31	0.000	31	0.000	34	0.033	34	0.000	34	0.000	34	0.000
NFP																										
Mushozokunokai	2	0.000																								
DSP																										
SDL																										
LP1																										
LP2	39	0.000	19	0.000	18	0.000	22	0.033	22	0.033	22	0.024	22	0.000	22	0.000										
NF																										
CL																										
LC																										
NSP																										
DRC																										
RC																										
CP			20	0.000	21	0.000	7	0.000	7	0.000	7	0.024	7	0.000												
NCP															9	0.000	9	0.000	4	0.033						
Indep	8		9		9		21		20		16		14		16		13		13		7		3		3	
JCP	26	0.000	26	0.000	26	0.000	20	0.033	20	0.033	20	0.024	20	0.000	20	0.000	20	0.000	9	0.033	9	0.000	9	0.000	9	0.000
Vacancy					1								2		3		5						1		2	
Total	500	500	499	480	480	480	478	477	475	480	480	479	478													

Table 3 Party switchers from the NFP between the 1996 and the 2000 elections

	00LDP			00DP			00CP			00LP		
	Dist	PR	Revival	Dist	PR	Revival	Dist	PR	Revival	Dist	PR	Revival
96 Election	21	3	0	25	11	0	15	2	0	8	7	1
00 Winner	10	10	0	18	5	7	7	0	0	3	1	7
00 Loser	4	0	0	6	0	0	8	2	0	5	0	0

Table 4 Party switchers between the 2000 and the 2003 general elections

	00Not LDP→03LDP			00LP→03DP			00DP→03NCP		
	Dist	PR	Revival	Dist	PR	Revival	Dist	PR	Revival
00 Election	5	0	0	4	1	13	1	2	1
03 Winner	2	3	0	7	0	7	0	0	0
03 Loser	0	0	0	3	1	0	4	0	0

Figure 1 Comparison of policy positions of the LDP and the DP: the 2003 expert survey

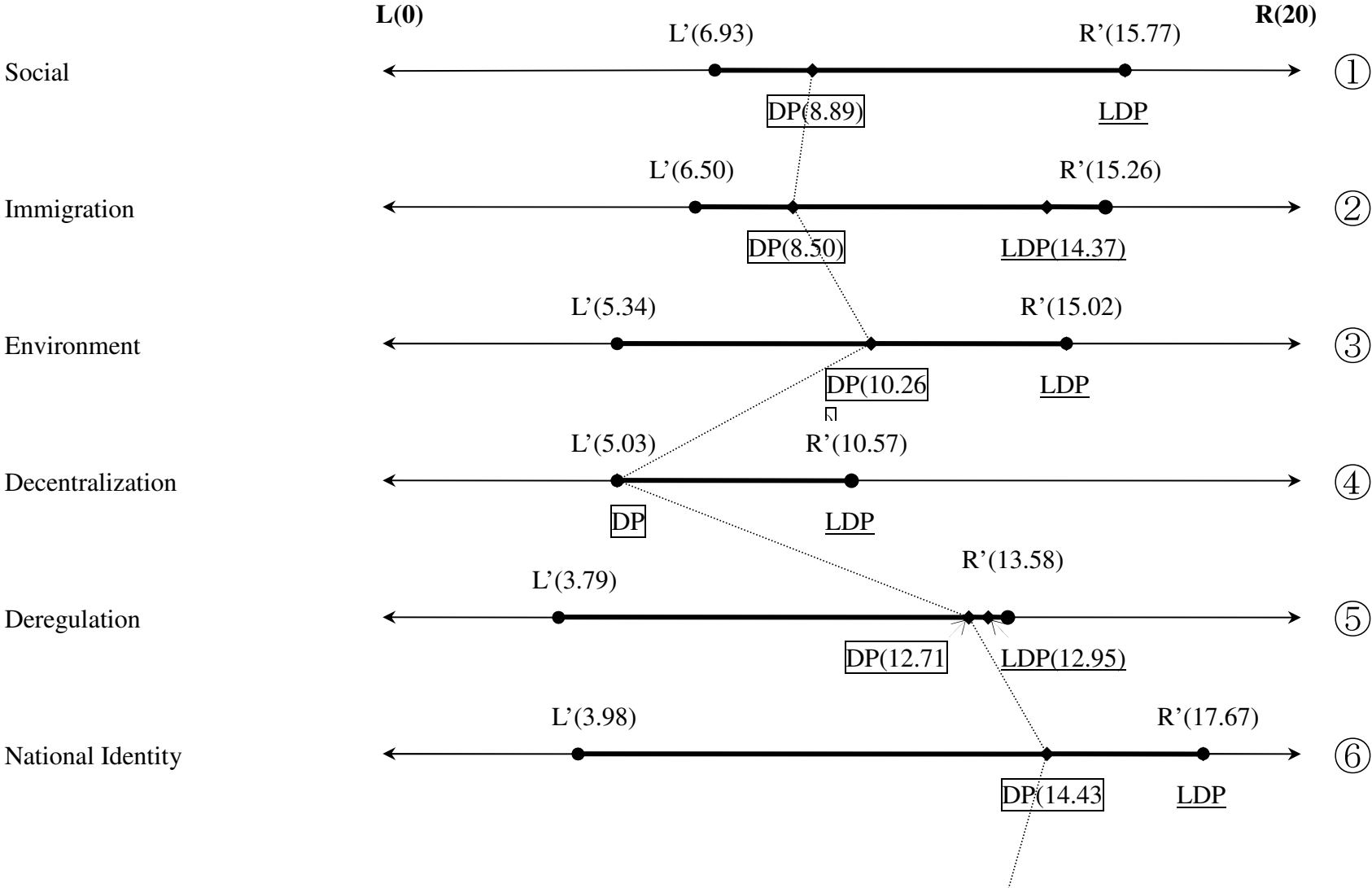


Figure 1 Comparison of policy positions of the LDP and the DP: the 2003 expert survey

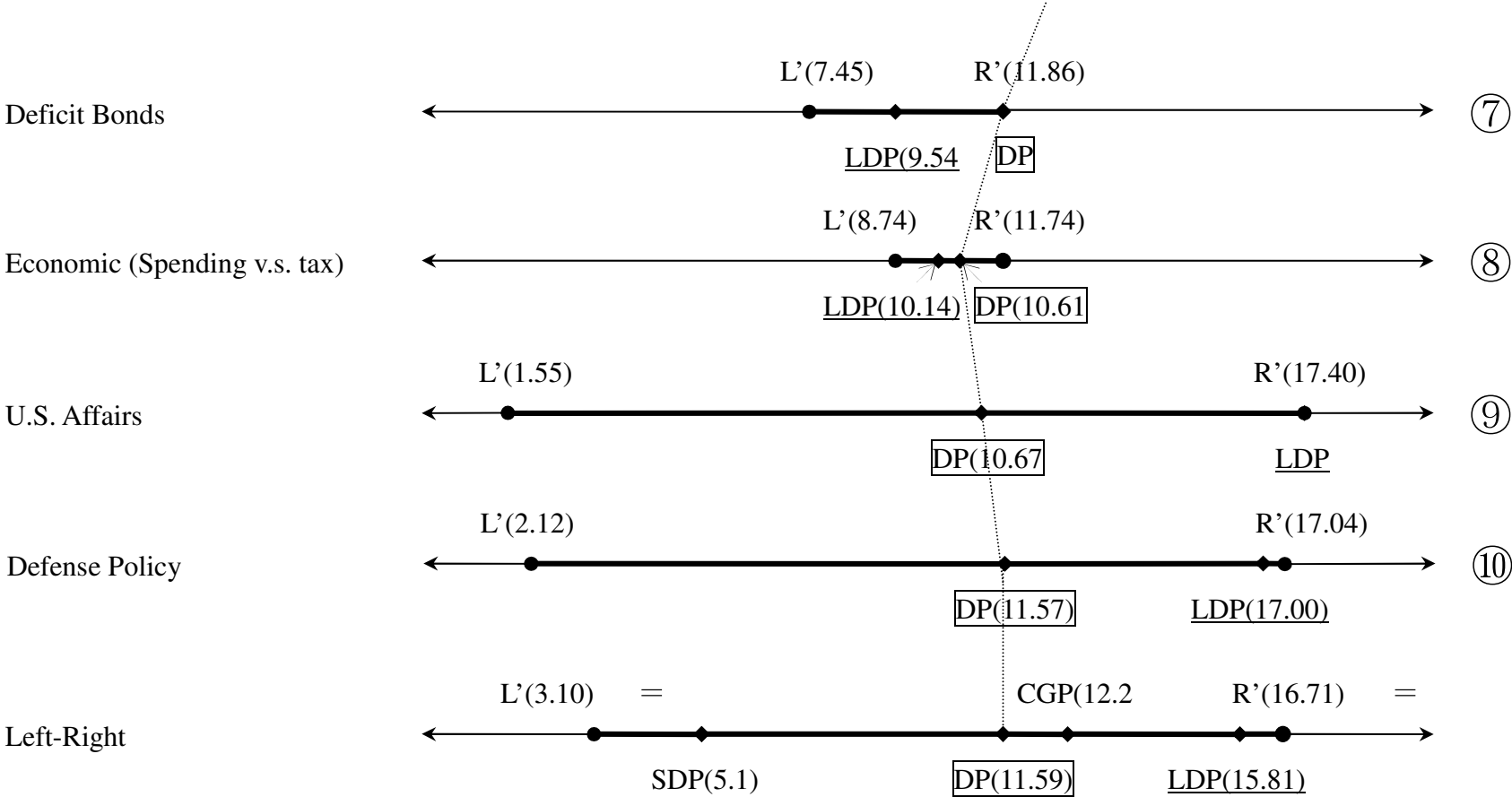


Figure 2 Comparison between the LDP and the DP in 1996, 2000 and 2003 general elections

