Democracy
in Theory and Practice
The Politics of Confrontation in 1950s

-Liberal/Democratic Party (LDP)
vs. Japan Socialist Party (JSP) and JCP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>L/DP vote %</th>
<th>seat %</th>
<th>JSP vote %, seats</th>
<th>JCP vote %, seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>21, 24</td>
<td>2.5, 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>27, 30</td>
<td>2, 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>29, 33</td>
<td>2, 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>33, 36</td>
<td>2.5, 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>36, 35</td>
<td>3, 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Need $\frac{2}{3}$ for constitutional revision

The Politics of Confusion

A haiku from the 90s…

During the time

Of just one Clinton

Seven Prime Ministers
11 Prime Ministers in 2 Decades

- Kaifu Toshiki 1989.8-1991.11 (LDP)
- Miyazawa Kiichi 1991.11-1993.8 (LDP)
- Hosokawa Morihiro 1993.8-1994.4 (non-LDP coal.)
- Hata Tsutomu 1994.4-1994.6 (non-LDP coal.)
- Murayama Tomiichi 1994.6-1996.1 (JSP-LDP coal.)
- Hashimoto Ryūtarō 1996.1-1998.7 (LDP)
- Obuchi Keizō 1998.7-2000.4 (LDP)
- Mori Yoshihiro 2000.4-2001.4 (LDP)
- Koizumi Junichirō 2001.4-2006.9 (LDP)
- Abe Shinzō 2006.9-2007.9 (LDP)
- Fukuda Yasuo 2007.9-2008.9 (LDP)
- Asō Tarō 2008.9-2009.9 (LDP)
- Hatoyama Yukio 2009.9-2010.6 (DPJ)
- Kan Naoto 2010.6-2011.9 (DPJ)
Disintegration of LDP Majority


• Discontent with LDP hegemony
  – Unequal distribution of wealth
  – Reliance on rural vote through gerrymandering
  – Reliance on organizational vote
Losing Elections

• 1989: Loss of House of Councilors (upper house) for the first time due to financial/sex scandals and introduction of unpopular tax

• 1993: Opposition’s “vote of no confidence” passes with support of LDP defectors lead by Ozawa Ichirō
  – Rise of first non-LDP government since 1947
  – PM Hosokawa Morihiro (Konoe Fumimaro’s grandson)
LDP Comeback (Sort of)

• June 1994: LDP-JSP(!) coalition under Socialist PM Murayama Tomiichi

• 1996: LDP-only government formed
  – Opposition coalesce into Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ)

• LDP back in government but still weak
“Koizumi Reforms”

• “I’ll break down the LDP if that’s what it takes.”
• Reforming financial sector for economic recovery
• Privatizing postal system: $3 trillion of savings
Good Timing?

• GDP grows
• Unemployment: 5.5% (2002) to 4.2% (2006)
• Tokyo Stock Exchange: from $140 to $160
Anomaly Among the 11 PMs

• Second longest term since Meiji: 2001-2006, 5.5 yrs

• September 2005: LDP landslide in the “Postal Reform Election” > wins 296 of 480 seats in lower h.

• Opposition sunk into oblivion by “Koizumi Theater”
Post-Koizumi Anxiety

• Critique of “neo-liberal” Koizumi reforms
• Growing socioeconomic inequality in a “stratified society”:
  – Emergence of winners/losers
    • Education
    • Income
• Growing sense of insecurity
Towards a Two-Party System (?)

- Koizumi followed by three unpopular LDP PMs
- 2007 upper house election: DPJ majority
- 2009.9 lower house election: DJP landslide
  - 308 out of 480 (bigger than Koizumi’s 2005 victory)
  - Promise reform with safety net; primacy of politicians over bureaucracy; assertive stance viz U.S.
  - PM Hatoyama Ichirō resigs in 8 months
  - PM Kan Naoto succeeds, only to lose upper house majority in July, 2010.
    - Heavily criticized for post-earthquake response and resigns
  - LDP comeback in another landslide in 2012: Abe 2.0
    - On course to beat Koizumi’s record (5.5 yrs)?
Abe Shinzō: “Illiberal Revisionist”
(or the Last Liberal Standing?)

Image by Lawrence Jackson. This image is in the public domain.
Source: Wikimedia Commons.
21H.155 Modern Japan: 1868 to Present
Spring 2017

For information about citing these materials or our Terms of Use, visit: https://ocw.mit.edu/terms.