Rise and Fall of the Japan Socialist Party
Its Strategies before the Mid-60s
and their Problems*

Satomi Tani

1. Four Stages of the JSP's History
2. Conservative Barrier
3. JSP and its Rural Strategy
4. Failure in Power
5. Local Government Alternative
6. Left wing Dominance and Organizational Fallacy
Conclusion

The Japan Socialist Party (JSP) was founded in October 1945, thereby unifying various pre-war socialist factions. The JSP made a lucky start and formed a socialist-leading coalition cabinet in 1947. After the severe defeat in the 1949 general election, socialists' force began to rise again. In the end of the 1950s, the JSP secured about one third of the Diet seats, 167 in the Lower House and 78 in the Upper House. Given that the socialists had never won more than 42 seats of the Lower House before the war, it was a remarkable success. No doubt the defeat of Japan in the War and nationwide poverty following it gave the JSP an impetus.

* I should like to express my appreciation to the Hoover Institution, Stanford, CA, for the opportunity to present the essential argument of this essay. For many helpful comments and criticisms I am indebted to the attendants at the conference on the 1955-system in Japan, held at Hoover Institution in March, 1988, especially to Tetsuya Kataoka, chairman of the conference. The draft of this essay was published in Tetsuya Kataoka ed., The 1955 System: The Origin of Japan's Politics (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1989). In this essay, I revised the draft very much.
But such a favourable condition for the JSP did not last long. In the latter half of the 1950s, the Japanese economy began to grow rapidly and the 1960s found more and more people enjoying new consumer life. The social structure of this country also began to change. The JSP seem to have failed in adapting itself to these changes. In the first half of the 1960s, the party was on a plateau; in the latter half, it experienced a sudden decline. The year 1960, when Japan underwent a great upheaval caused by the controversy over the revision of the US-Japan Security Treaty, was a watershed in the JSP's history.

The purpose of this chapter is to trace the JSP's history before the mid-1960s and try to explain why it failed in growing into a party strong enough to oust the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) from the government. I also try to find some possible alternatives open to the JSP in those days. Needless to say, politics is the art of the possibility. History is an amalgamation of irresistible environmental elements and more or less positive choices of various actors. Then, it is worthwhile to investigate some possibilities open to the JSP so that we might more fully understand Japanese politics.

Most political scientists studying modern Japanese politics have tended to concentrate their attention on the LDP, neglecting the JSP and other minor parties. Of course, this is understandable. Though the JSP has been the largest of the opposition parties since the formation of the LDP in 1955, it has never been able to break through the "barrier of one third in the Diet." In contrast with the JSP's gloomy plight, the LDP has always been in the position of governing party. Under such a predominant party system, it is rather natural that many people have given only little significance to the role of any opposition parties, at least in the policy-making process.

In these days, however, there is a new trend to reassess the influence and the significance of the opposition parties, especially the JSP. The article of Kataoka in this volume is one of good examples of this trend. He argues that the JSP helped the main stream of the LDP, the Yoshida faction, to effectively resist against the pressure from the right wing of the LDP and the claim of America to rearm. On the other hand, Mabuchi pointed out JSP's influence over the distributive policy sphere, such as
welfare policy. Deliberation procedures and rather short session of the Diet also gives advantage to the opposition parties; they do have more influence than expected from their forces in the Diet.

Anyway, the JSP has been playing an important role in the postwar Japanese political system. To discuss various aspects of the socialist politics in Japan still remains significant. In this chapter, I will analyse the causes of the JSP's stagnation focussing on five different points: (1) the Japanese political culture surrounding the JSP; (2) the deficit of the JSP's rural policies; (3) the failure of the Katayama Cabinet, the only cabinet led by socialists; (4) the shortage of the JSP's local government activities; (5) left-wing dominance and electoral strategies of the JSP. Before discussing these points, let's have a bird's-eye view of the JSP's history until now.

1. Four Stages of the JSP's History

In this paper, the electoral gains and losses of political parties are traced in respect of their share of the electorate, not their percentage of votes. Using such an index has a number of merits. For one thing, we can exclude the temporal effects of changing turnout so that the long term trends of the parties may become clearer. Second, using the index of the share of the electorate can bring cases to light where one party seems to lose electoral support even if it obtains more votes than in the previous election, on the fluctuation of the turnout. The net strength of a party can be estimated in terms of its capacity to get voters go to the polling stations and write the names of its candidates (in Japan, all adults are automatically enlisted on the electoraterolls), though the data of opinion polls, the share of votes and the share of seats are also taken into consideration.

Figure 1 shows all the postwar electoral results of the LDP and the JSP except for that of 1946 as the 1946 election was conducted in a way very different from the others. On the basis of Figure 1, the JSP's history can be divided into three or four periods.
- including conservative parties till 1955 and winning conservative independents.
- including the right and the left JSP during its 1951-55 division and the short-lived Labourers—Farmers Party.

**Figure 1** Share of the Electorate at General Elections

a. Period 1: 1945-60

During this period the JSP steadily grew in size except for the defeat of 1949. This growth seems to have been maintained till 1960, if we add the share of the vote the newly formed DSP garnered to that of the JSP. The two parties have not been reunified as yet, but some influential Diet members of both parties now frequently discuss the possibility of a reunification.

This period also saw the first and the last socialistic Cabinet, led by Prime Minister Tetsu Katayama. After the unexpected victory in the 1947 general election, the JSP decided, or was compelled, to form a Cabinet with two conservative parties. The JSP also participated in the succeeding Ashida government. Though the two successive cabinets survived for only sixteen months in total, the JSP remained as one of the most powerful parties till 1955, because of the conflict among conservative...
forces.

On the other hand, the JSP suffered from centrifugal trends. First, the extreme left wing as well as the extreme right seceded from the party in 1948, though most of the members later rejoined the JSP. The main stream itself was twice split as a result of ideological differences. The first split lasted for only two months, but the second continued for four years (1951-55). Then came the defection of the DSP in 1959.

It was fortunate for the JSP that the conservatives began to lose votes after its 1952 peak. After that their decline was so linear and the JSP's growth so steady that many Japanese anticipated the JSP would be in power sooner or later. The socialists were very optimistic for a few years.

Another feature of this period was that the left wing of the JSP expanded in terms of the number of Diet members faster than the right wing. In 1953 the elected members of the former outnumbered those of the latter. The left wing began to oppress the right during this period. The secession of the DSP can be explained in this context.

b. Period 2: 1960-67

In the 1960 general election, the JSP lost 5.2 percent of its share of the electorate. This was due to the defection of the DSP. But the party maintained the support of 20 per cent of the electorate until 1967. That is, the JSP was on a rather high plateau, though its rapid growth, as in the 1950s, abruptly ended. The DSP, meanwhile, remained as a minor party. In this sense, the DSP's secession directly damaged the JSP and made them lose 5 per cent of the electorate, which amounted to around 25 seats in the Lower House.

On the other hand, the LDP was losing votes as before, despite the unprecedented prosperity Japan enjoyed during the same period. The difference between the LDP's share of the votes and the JSP's decreased to 17.5 per cent in 1967, the smallest throughout the postwar period. If we add the DSP's share to that of the JSP, the difference is only 12.1 per cent. Although most socialists and social democrats were discouraged by the LDP's overwhelming majority in the Diet and by the fact that they could see no improvement in their electoral results since 1960, it was in a way
during this period that they were closest to power.

Changes appeared in the JSP in the last few years of the 1950s. First, controversies over the party’s basic strategy, known as the structural reform debates, led to factional reshuffles. The new right-wing group led by Saburo Eda, a former left-wing activist who advocated the new doctrine of socialism called “structural reform theory”, gradually began to attract not a few sympathizers, in spite of the unchanged predominance of the left wing.

Second, several old influential Diet members and other incumbents began to lose in elections. Instead, newcomers who were sponsored by the trade unions, especially by Sohyo, the General Council of Trade Unions of Japan, increased steadily in number. Some of them were former leaders of trade unions, especially unions in the public sector. Most of such new Diet members belonged to the left-wing factions and, as a result, reduced the influence of the newly formed right-wing group.

c. Period 3: 1967-76

In the general election of 1969, the JSP at one time lost almost six per cent of the electorate; since then, the party has not recovered the loss, staying on a lower plane for several years. At this time, the sudden fall was not caused by any defection or split, as in the case of 1960. The DSP kept its original electoral support. The Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 and the Chinese turbulence caused by the “great cultural revolution” in the ‘60s partially affected the election. There can be some other reasons. But this is not the topic of this paper.

On the other hand, the conservatives at last reached the level of the lowest support in spite of the secession of a small and short-lived group, the New Liberal Club (NLC, which split away from the LDP in 1976 but returned in 1987). The sum of the LDP’s share and that of the NLC fluctuated around 34.5 per cent during this period. The defection of the NLC, however, annoyed the LDP in the Diet because they refused to ally with the LDP. The LDP found it difficult to maintain a majority in either of the Houses without an ally.

In so far as the local level is concerned, an interesting change can be
pointed to. The left-wing parties, especially the JSP and the Japan Communist Party (JCP), successfully attacked conservative power in many local governments, including such important areas as Tokyo and Osaka. The so-called “Kakushin Jichitai” (progressive local governments) flourished here and there, supported by various left-leaning coalitions. In most cases, the JSP was one of the ruling parties leading such a coalition. The progressive local governments had a significant effect in such spheres as social welfare administration and improvement of the environment; the LDP had to change some of its national policies.

d. Period 4: 1976-

During this period the JSP suffered from a creeping decline in part due to the exacerbation of the conflicts with the extreme left-wing faction (the Socialist Society). Saburo Eda, the leader of one of right-wing factions, defected from the party and several Diet members followed him. They formed the Social Democratic Federation (DSF), but Eda died soon after the defection. The party exhausted so much energy to shake off the image as extremely pro-Marxist party and to integrate itself that it was not able to concentrate upon policy-making or upon pressuring the government. Finally, such turmoil and inertia led the JSP to a fatal defeat in the 1986 general election: it obtained only 84 seats (one more elected joined the party later) compared with 112 seats in the previous election.

Many opinion polls, in the meantime, pointed to a revival of the conservatives. The LDP started to recover some of its lost support, especially after 1980 (see Figure 4 on p. 33) and sometimes succeeded in attaining a comfortable majority in the Diet, though its share of the electorate was at best 35 per cent or so. The conservatives in total had more than 290 members elected in 1980 and in 1986.

Such trends affected the local level. The conservatives resumed power in many local governments once held by the progressives. The DSP and the Komeito (the Clean Government Party, CGP), both of which were rather left-oriented formerly, made a turn to the right and allied themselves with the LDP. Hereafter, local governments, especially at the prefectural level and in large cities, became more and more technocratic;
seemingly apolitical rule by experts in administration became the order of the day.

A brief review of the JSP's history as we have made so far brings to light some interesting questions. For example, what are the real causes of the serious setback in 1969? What kinds of effect did the progressive local governments have on the JSP? What were the reasons for the rise of the leftist Socialist Society? As mentioned earlier, however, the following discussion will be limited only to the periods a and b.

2. Conservative Barrier

The JSP failed to break the barrier of one third in the Diet. In contrast with the JSP, the LDP has ever been in power since its formation. Why has the JSP failed to become stronger? Why have the conservatives been so successful?

On this point, S. Sato and T. Matsuzaki find the reason to be the highly homogeneous character of Japanese society. According to them, it is easy for the Japanese conservatives to integrate themselves, because there are very few political conflicts or political compartmentalizations stemming from religious or ethnic cleavages (the only exception might be the CGP). Moreover, the correlation between social strata or occupational groups and political support is not clear. In this way, the lack of class and ethnic politics in Japan explains the uninterrupted rule of the LDP.\(^8\)

It is certain that the ethnic minorities in Japan such as Ainu, Ulta, Korean, and Chinese are so small in number that they can hardly be influential in politics. Concerning class politics, class consciousness is generally weak. Even industrial workers are apt to be more loyal to their company than to their own class.\(^9\) The homogeneous society hypothesis is rather attractive. It surely gives light on some aspects of Japanese politics. But one of its weak points is that it does not explain how the homogeneity is linked with the conservative dominance.\(^10\) Even if we assume that this is self-evident, the hypothesis cannot explain why the LDP continued to lose votes during the 1950s and the 1960s.

More popular way of explanation is to associate Japanese political culture with the LDP's electoral success. In fact, classes or other social
cleavages do exist in Japan. But as Flanagan and Ricardson pointed out, effect of these upon political behaviour, especially voting one, is often overpowering by some cultural factors, such as tendency to respect human relation and social network. And Japanese political culture is usually thought to be favourable to the conservatives. For example, R. J. Hrebener argues as follows: the reason for the LDP's rule can be found in part in Japan's essentially conservative and passive electorate and in part in the ineptitude of the growing number of opposition parties, especially the JSP.

Of course, it is dangerous to too exaggerate the importance of the political culture. Some of recent studies on voting behaviour and party support reveal that occupational interests, policy preference, and other social factors are important to form voters' political attitude. But we cannot ignore the political culture underlying those factors, especially in dealing with the Japanese politics early in the post war period. Indeed, Japanese people are very passive in the sphere of politics, though it remains moot whether they are strikingly so in comparison with some of European nations such as Italy. Whenever researchers ask them if they are willing to participate in politics to realize their own interests and ideas, less than twenty percent of them answer positively. Most people prefer to depend on their representatives or politicians to realize their own interests and policy preferences. The passivity toward political activities leads to acceptance of present authorities or orders and indirectly help the conservatives.

Japanese political culture helps the conservatives in a more direct fashion. C. Hayashi statistically analyses the relationship between thinking way of Japanese in daily life and their party support. He finds that they tend to support the LDP not necessarily because of its policies but because they like its opportunistic style of behaviour and traditional, not fully rational, way of thinking. They are apt to hate those who strictly cling to some principles or ideologies and who deny what they vaguely imagine as traditional things. They also dislike incessant criticism expressed by the progressivists to the present state of the society because they feel it impose psychological strains on themselves. All that is left to mention is the propensities of some people to defer to their superiors and
suspect as unmoral those who challenge the present authorities.\textsuperscript{146}

Thus, the more a party insists on radical changes of the society and politics, criticizing mercilessly the government and other powerfulls, the more people become opposed to the party. Clearly, such psychological tendency damages the communists worst. Moreover, governments before the war successfully inculcated the fear of any thoughts criticising the existing resime, especially the communism. This is one of reasons why the Japan Communist Party (JCP) could not obtain enough votes in the several general elections after the war. The JSP, too, no doubt suffered, and is suffering to some degree, from such a mental tendency, though it has been ideologically much more flexible than the JCP. Even rational-minded conservatives often prove to be unpopular. People are apt to prefer modestly irrational and pragmatical conservatives.

Such conservative disposition did not change very much in spite of the occupation reforms and the great metamorphosis of social structure caused by the rapid growth of Japanese economy.\textsuperscript{147} Needless to say, the conservative culture has been more dominant among rural dwellers than urban ones and it is the major obstacle to the penetration of progressive or socialist forces. Even in the general election of 1947, when the JSP went slightly ahead of any of the other parties, it failed to gain any seats in as many as 17 constituencies, most of which were predominantly rural. One constituency in the Hokuriku district has not allowed any non-conservative candidate to win in all of the general elections after the war.

The conservative atmosphere in rural areas crystallizes itself in the form of jiban. The jiban consists of several counties and a few towns where politicians can always expect strong electoral support. In their jibans, they keep many local leaders and notables under their control. Those local influentials, who are conservative-oriented, are usually not affiliated with any political party. Their authority is apolitical, but they can successfully get many rural voters write the names of their conservative bosses who are candidates on the ballot papers, even if the voters do not have any ideas of their policies.\textsuperscript{148}

It is said that the jiban became popular in the 1920s.\textsuperscript{149} Before the war, it was local notables many of whom were landowners that associated voters with conservative politicians.\textsuperscript{150} The occupation reforms, such as
agrarian reform and purges of many politicians at local levels as well as at national level, swept the influence of old notables. But the tendency of local people to vote for the candidate who ran from their locality did not change much. Moreover, new notables took place of the old ones who had been ousted. They were newly elected local assemblymen, members of newly organized local committees, officials of agricultural cooperatives, and the like. After the war, it was those new notables as elected office holders that actually had authority over the ordinary people.

In national (and prefectoral) elections, they gathered votes for conservative candidate in rural areas. Faces on the jibans changed but the way of vote-gathering remained the same, at least for several years after the war. For example, R.E. Ward, who carried out intensive research in a village in the outskirts of Okayama City in the 1950s, found that the jibans of the prewar influential politicians remained considerably intact even after the war.

Such jiban was personally owned property of each politician, so to speak, and it was possible for him to give it to another politician or would-be politician. Therefore, many new conservative candidates succeeded to the jibans of the purged politicians in the first general election after the war. Even Shigeru Yoshida had to get a bequeathed jiban when he ran in his first general election, because he did not have any elective posts when he was appointed as prime minister just before the new constitution became effective.

Of course, its electoral importance did not remain unchanged. New notables could hold their offices as long as they were elected. Their positions were not so stable as prewar landowners. As democratic thinking way attracted more rural people, so the ability of the jiban to move voters shrunk. Some of alert politicians began to seek new type of vote-gathering organization, Koenkai, around the mid-1950s. The Koenkai is typically a private organization for a politician to organize voters directly, that is, with neither party intervention nor dependence on the ability of local notables to gather votes. Today, even municipal assemblymen play only limited role in electioneering.

But at least during the early period after the War, the jiban was the major obstacle for the JSP. It offsetted the favourable effects on the party
caused by the occupation reforms. In fact, it was difficult for socialists to
find their own rural leaders or subleaders. Ward points out that one has
to meet six requirements so as to be influential in rural areas: 1) to be
local, 2) to have leisure time, 3) to have enough understanding and
knowledge about agricultural problems, 4) to be middle-aged or elderly
men, 5) to be of gentle birth, 6) not to be affiliated with any political
parties. Some of these conditions are somewhat, if not completely,
contradictory to the ethos of socialism. As rural people followed their
leaders not because of the latter's political thought but because of their
social authority, socialists were not able to enjoy enough opportunities to
gain access to ordinary villagers.

Ward concludes his report as follows:

An appreciable decrease in conservative strength in one of
Japan's staunchest conservative areas and the gradual emer-
gence of a left-wing opposition are long-term and slow-moving
trends which are subject to future interruption, diversion, or
distortion in terms of their political consequences.

As a matter of fact, considering the enormous stresses to
which postwar Japanese society has been subjected, the
continued strength, resiliency, and adaptability of the tradi-
tional sociopolitical order and processes are most impressive.
Politically, as otherwise, Niike ['the village researched by
him'] remains an essentially conservative community.

In the 1940s and the 1950s, Japanese society was predominantly agricul-
tural except for in a few metropolitan cities. Even in 1960, 44 per cent of
Japanese lived outside cities as administratively defined. Moreover, as the
law enacted in 1958 prompted the merger of municipalities, Japanese
cities contained many rural areas within their boundaries. In those days,
it was crucial for all parties to gain the support of farmers and other rural
dwellers.

Being assisted by Japanese political, or apolitical culture, many conser-
vatve politicians were able to easily entrench themselves against the
socialist offensive and postwar democratization introduced by the Occu-
pation Army in the rural areas, whatever official policies they presented
to their electorates. Even in urban areas, the conservative tradition
continued to capture numerous people, including some would-be socialist
activists. Socialists as well as conservatives with modernized minds
needed enormous energy to survive such a situation.

3. JSP and its Rural Strategy

Though the barrier to entry was high, socialists did enjoy considerable
support in some rural areas, where they developed an appropriate strat-
edy and were more active than conservatives. For example, the JSP
obtained more than one third of allocated seats of seven typically agricul-
tural prefectures in the 1947 general election. In two of them the party
won even a half of the allocated seats. Why was this possible? It was
simply because most of those areas were where socialists had struggled
very hard on behalf of tenant farmers for a long time. Such a fact might
suggest something about the JSP’s rural strategy.

First, the JSP’s agricultural policies have to be examined. What kind of
policies did it envisage? How did it try to organize farmers or approach
farmers’ organizations?

The agrarian reform is one of the most important political events in
postwar history. It distributed to the tenants more than five million acres
of farmland previously owned by the landlord class and completely
overthrew the rule of parasitic landlords. Needless to say, the reform was
ordered by the Occupation Army, though some Japanese bureaucrats and
others had realized its nesessity before the end of the war. The social-
ists who had been struggling to emancipate miserable tenants from their
semi-feudalistic position were surprised at the reform. They were indeed
stupified because their goal was suddenly fulfilled by others. But they
should not have been so.

Besides the agrarian reform, various bills were enacted to democratize
and improve the rural society. For example, the Land Improvement Act
was enacted in 1949 to help cultivators to exchange their paddy fields and
to enlarge them for convenience. Each local government was ordered to
establish an elected agricultural committee, one of newly introduced
administrative committees. And more important was the Agricultural Cooperative Act passed in 1947. These acts enlarged the scope of governmental activities in the agricultural sphere. This enabled the political parties to develop various kinds of new strategies if they wanted: asserting to revise some acts or introduce new ones, asking the government to implement administrative measures for farmers in terms of a given act, and so on. Through such activities, some parties gained the support of the farmers.

However, the JSP in the 1940s did not make any concrete proposals to improve farming except for some public assertions such as nationalizing fertiliser companies. Even in 1949, the action program of the party still pointed out the necessity to immediately formulate an agricultural policy and principles to lead the farmers movements. But socialists spent enormous energy (in vain) debating the way of the expected socialist revolution. As regards agricultural policy, the conservatives or the LDP did not have any substantial ideas either, but they could rely on the bureaucrats. They also could, and did, pressure bureaucrats concerning various programs and measures.

Later, the JSP started to formulate more logical agricultural policies. Their basic idea was to “modernize” farming by joint management and protect Japanese agriculture against the international free trade in agrarian products. The party tried to isolate the agriculture sector from the structural changes in the Japanese economy. The question is, then, how to implement such a scheme, even if it was feasible to some extent. But it was not clear what the socialists thought on this point. Anyway, such a stress on a cooperative style of farming brings us to the problems of the farmers' organizations and their movements.

Socialists who participated in the tenant movements before the war formed the Japan Farmers Union (JFU) in February, 1946. They struggled fiercely for the accomplishment of agrarian reform and the JFU rapidly grew in size. But it is natural that the union shrank rapidly after the reform was completed, because it did not made much effort to prepare for the post-reform period. It might not be too exaggerated to say that the socialists did not think of anything other than class struggle. Once the agrarian reform was completed, they could not persuade farmers of the
necessity of a new kind of class battle. Since around 1950, the weight of farmers in socialists movements incessantly decreased except such special cases as where they were threaten to be deprived of their newly acquired farm lands by the government planning to build bases for the American army.\(^{36}\)

On the other hand, the agricultural cooperatives introduced in 1947 organized almost all the farmers. The original purpose of the establishment was not to promote joint farming as the JSP had at first hoped, but to improve the farmers' economic conditions by such means as collective purchase of equipment and loans on favourable conditions. It was purely an economic organization in principle and prohibited to act politically by the law. But it was very important which political force took hegemonic control in the cooperative in each area because it was almost the only organization which attracted all the farmers. If socialists could gain the leadership in terms of agriculture and economy among the farmers, they could have won the farmers' trust and secured their political support. But we can hardly find the agricultural cooperatives mentioned in the JSP's major documents.

The second possible type of rural strategy was not directly aimed at agriculture. It was to contain widely ranging policies and programs from regional development policies in general to the improvement of specific rural roads. Early in the postwar period, most rural people were poor and local infrastructures miserable. Apart from the macro plan to develop backward areas, then, there remained many things for politicians to do for the benefit of their rural voters. Ex-prime minister Kakuei Tanaka, for example, drew a huge amount of public work projects to his backward constituency in Niigata Prefecture and succeeded in securing the overwhelming support of his voters. Public works have two merits: first, they improve the rural infrastructure directly; second, they bring people more employment opportunities.\(^{37}\)

In contrast to Tanaka, Shoichi Miyake, one of former leaders of the tenant movement in Niigata Prefecture and later the vice-speaker of the Lower House, who had been elected a Diet member backed by the JSP from the same constituency as Tanaka's, would prove to be impotent, or reluctant, whenever he was asked by his voters to influence the central
bureaucracy and have them do something for their villages and towns. The supporters of this famous socialist Diet member became so disappointed that the support for the JSP itself began to decline in this area. Many voters who once had supported the JSP switched their votes to Tanaka, that is, to the LDP. Even some socialist subleaders in this area deserted the JSP and participated in the Tanaka's political machine. This episode is suggestive in thinking about the JSP's general attitude towards local problems.

This is not to say that socialist politicians should act in the same way as conservatives. Rather, they should have been more sensitive to their voters' demands and through coping with them worked out a unique and realistic developmental plan of their own. After all, the JSP could not, or did not, make the most of the fruits of the tenant movements, partially because it clung blindly to the idea of "socialist agriculture," and of class struggle and regarded it as dishonest to try to develop local communities or local agriculture in the midst of the capitalistic society. But it must be recognized that the JSP did have some, if not enough, resources and possibilities. They should have made positive use of them, though it was still difficult for them to do so, in so far as they were alienated from power at the center.

4. Failure in Power

One of the best ways for a party to gain the trust of voters is to be in power and show its governing ability. For example, the Social-Democratic Party in Germany (SPD), which was an opposition party after the war, decided to form a "grand coalition" government with the Christian Democratic Union (CDU-CSU) in 1966. The successful experiment of the coalition brought the SPD more votes in the following general election. When the SPD participated in the coalition government, its share of the electorate was 34.1 per cent. It rose to 37.0 per cent in 1969 and to 41.7 per cent in 1972.

In Japan, the JSP shared power with two conservative parties in 1947 and Tetsu Katayama, the leader of the JSP, presided over the Cabinet. After the Katayama government collapsed, the JSP participated in
another coalition government. But the JSP made such fatal mistakes in
the two governments that it lost considerable support in the 1949 general
election. If socialists had administered the two governments better, the
early period of the JSP would probably have had a positive impact on
their future support. Why did they fail?

First comes the intention and policy change of the General Headquaters
of the Occupation Forces (GHQ). As the supreme force, GHQ often
wielded absolute influences on Japanese politics. Without the decisive
resolution of GHQ to democratize and demilitarize Japan, most of the
post war reforms could not have been realized. GHQ forced Japan to
institutionalize complete political freedom. Needless to say, all the leftist
forces in Japan benefited a great deal from this democratization policy of
GHQ.

It was more important for the leftists that GHQ expected much of
them. At first, even positively supported the JCP in order to oppress the
ultranationalists. After a short honeymoon, GHQ and the JCP soon began
to quarrel with each other and were divorced finally. In place of the JCP,
GHQ found the JSP lovable and preferable. Early in the occupation period,
it thought of the JSP as the liberal, middle-of-the-road force between the
Communists and the conservatives and hoped it play a leading role in
democratizing the party politics. GHQ's favourable appreciation of the
JSP led the party to power.

It cannot be explained only in terms of the result of the 1947 general
election why the formation of the Katayama coalition government was
possible. As mentioned above, the number of seats the JSP obtained in
that election was far short of the majority. Coalition government was
inevitable for the JSP, but the then largest conservative party, the Liberal
Party led by Shigeru Yoshida, refused to participate in the government
led by the socialists at the early stage of negotiation among parties. If the
second largest conservative party, the Democratic Party, had rejected the
request to join the coalition, the Katayama government would not have
been realized. Indeed, the Democratic Party sought a chance to have their
own prime minister. It was the statement of GHQ to support Katayama
that finally made the Democratic Party decide to accept the socialist
premiership and join the coalition cabinet.
This meant, however, that the Katayama government was too dependent on the GHQ's mind to move by itself. With a slight withdrawal of the GHQ's support for it the JSP could easily be wrecked. For example, the Katayama Government was damaged by GHQ's pressure to purge Rikizo Hirano, the then Minister of Agriculture and Forestry; he was judged to have been too sympathetic to militarism during the war. Hirano was one of the founders of the JSP and played a conspicuous role in the election campaign in 1946. His purge in 1947 was one of the main reasons for the secession of sixteen Diet members from the JSP to form the new but short-lived party, the Social Progressivist Party.  

In 1948, U. S. occupation policy changed abruptly due to the escalation of the Cold War. American government shifted its policy stance from farther democratization of Japan to economic recovery of this country. This shift changed the power balance within GHQ. Instead of progressive groups represented by the Government Section (GS) of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP) which had promoted the democratization of Japan radically, conservative, anti-GS groups began to gain power. They, especially the second General Staff Section (G2), tried to brake democratization of Japan and backed up rightists such as Shigeru Yoshida to make economic recovery smooth. After short resistance against the policy change of his government, MacArthur himself switched his support to Yoshida's Liberal Party.  

The shift in U. S. policy deprived the JSP of a good reason to urge the conservative parties to accept another alliance with the socialists. It became almost impossible for the JSP to get in power unless it obtained the majority in the Diet by itself, at least during the occupation period. The only alternative left to the JSP in those days might be to maintain the second socialist-conservative coalition government, the Ashida cabinet, as long as possible. But the Shoden scandal finally ousted the JSP from the government June, 1948.

Behind this event, too, was a power struggle within GHQ. That is, the rising G2 successfully made use of the scandal in which it was said the president of the Showa Denko Inc. (Shoden) bribed several politicians and bureaucrats, including Premier Hitoshi Ashida, and ex-Vice-Premier Suehiro Nishio who was a right wing leader of the JSP. Almost all the
suspected politicians were of the middle-of-the-road camp supported by GS, the rival of G2. Even some of officers of GS were suspected to be involved in the crime. It was a good chance for G2 to bring downfall to GS and its associated Japanese politicians. G2 pulled strings to have even slightly suspected people arrested. Today, there are some who assert the scandal itself was just a frameup by G2. Indeed, most politicians, including Ashida and Nishio, were acquitted later.

Due to the Shoden scandal, the parties forming the coalition lost a great many votes in the following election. The JSP, especially, suffered from the loss of its clean image owing to the arrest of Nishio. This meant, at the same time, that it lost a versatile politician who was indispensable to the then JSP. Moreover, the JSP became unable to rely on the authority of the SCAP.

Second, the instability of the Katayama government was partially caused by its prematurity. Less than two years had passed since the formation of the JSP when it took over power. The JSP needed more time to settle its organizational problems and to learn how to act in the Diet. Besides, the JSP obtained only 17.6 per cent of the electorate, less than one third of all the seats of the Lower House in 1947, in contrast with 34.1 per cent which the SPD gained in 1965. It was inevitable that the JSP’s initiative in the coalition government was heavily constrained by the overwhelming power of the conservatives.

When the JSP found itself the leading party as the result of the 1947 general election, it was hardly prepared to lead a cabinet. The party did not even expected such an electoral success, as mentioned above. In fact, it reluctantly came into power because it was under an illusion that the party politics requested the leading party to form a cabinet under any circumstances. But it was possible, and certainly better, for the JSP to wait for another chance, because the conservative forces secured the majority in all.

Shigeru Yoshida, leader of the Liberal Party, also play an important part, say, in driving socialists into power. He exactly perceived the poor ability of the JSP to manage a cabinet. Insisting that the “rule of the constitutional government” demanded the leading party to take power, he cunningly refused to participate in a coalition with the JSP. He refused
to make a conservative coalition government led by himself, too. He anticipated the short life of a socialist government and deliberately made it impossible for the JSP to remain an opposition. He expected socialists' blunders to impress voters with their inability to govern. He hit the mark successfully.\(^{107}\)

Third, the JSP lacked a decisive and trustworthy leader. Prime Minister Katayama was known to be indecisive. He neither rejected the move to ask him to form a cabinet nor did he take a leading role in the coalition: he took office as prime minister quite reluctantly. When he was faced with the pressure of the GHQ to purge Hirano, he could not personally persuade Hirano to resign his ministerial post. Instead, he concealed the real reason to ask Hirano to resign and complicated the matter. In the end, he was compelled to dismiss Hirano. Some right-wing Diet members sympathetic with Hirano got angry with the dismissal and defected the JSP. Among them was Zenko Suzuki, ex-prime minister of the LDP government. When the left wing of the JSP rebelled against the Cabinet over the supplementary budget of 1948, Katayama did not carry out his policy decisively. His lack of strong leadership accelerated the centrifugal trends in the JSP and encourage attacks from both inside and outside the party. But the JSP did not have any other leader to take Katayama's place, partly because some of the party's influential leaders had been purged by GHQ.

Finally, socialists lacked a willingness to maintain the Cabinet. In general, political parties, once in power, will endeavor to hold the government under their control as long as possible. But the socialists in the Katayama government gave up power quite easily. As a matter of fact, the House of Representatives did neither pass a vote of nonconfidence nor vote down the full budget. The cabinet could have survived a little longer, provided that Katayama had decided to stay in power, though he would perhaps have encountered the more difficult problem of rearmament soon thereafter.

If the Katayama government had survived longer, the Shoden scandal might not have occurred. In fact, the government had many talented intellectuals to cope with the problems of Japanese society. Therefore, if the government had had enough time to implement its policies and
programs, the voters would probably have evaluated the JSP's ability to rule more favourably. They could have improved the economy, too.

The failure of the Katayama government led to a serious socialist defeat in the 1949 general election. As a result, the JSP lost its post-war momentum, though it regained most of its lost votes in the 1952 general election. It also spoiled the political career of those who were newly elected after the war. They were damaged before they fully established their credentials; many of them were not reelected. This was serious for a semi-cardinal party such as the JSP, because the party depended considerably on the votes cast for each JSP-backed candidate for rather personal reasons. Besides, the failure of the coalition governments was a prelude to the decline of the right wing, because it was the right-wing leaders that accepted the agreement to ally the party with the two conservative parties in spite of the left-wing's opposition.

The JSP had at least one more chance to share power. The JSP can come into power only when the conservatives are divided into a few parties and when, at the same time, no single party can enjoy a majority in the Diet. The first such chance came to the JSP in 1947. The second and probably the last chance smiled at the JSP in 1953, when the Liberal Party led by Shigeru Yoshida lost its majority in the Lower House so that no single party could form a stable government without a coalition. The whole JSP obtained 138 seats, though it was at the time dividing into two factions.

Seeing the struggle among the conservatives, Minoru Takano, chief executive of Sōkyō (General Council of Japanese Trade Unions) and one of the left-wing leaders in the socialist movement, suggested that the JSP support an anti-Yoshida protagonist, Mamoru Shigemitsu, the leader of the Progressive Party to make a more acceptable government to the socialists. It is said that it was not feasible to make a socialist-conservative coalition in those days, but still Takano's suggestion is noteworthy. If they had dared to promote Shigemitsu as prime minister, the socialists might at least have succeeded in intensifying the conflict among the conservatives and have gotten closer to power.

Why did the JSP not seriously consider the possibility of another coalition government? The official reason was that it was unacceptable to
blur the distinction between the progressive side and the conservative one. But such an explanation is not persuasive enough. There could be other reasons. First, the left wing of the JSP was influenced by anarcho-syndicalism and was apt to make little of governmental activities. Indeed, it opposed the formation of the Katayama government, too. Second, many socialists feared that they would impair their "Shutaisei," if they participated recklessly in a coalition. The word "Shutaisei," originated from German idealism, and as such means something like self-identification that earnest and genuine socialists were supposed to hold. Third, their bitter experience during the coalition days discouraged them from making another attempt.

Eventually, most socialists were too naive to pursue any possibility to divide and weaken their enemy. The conservatives united themselves into the LDP in 1955 and did not allow the JSP to take advantage of the conflicts among them any longer.

5. Local Government Alternative

In most of the industrialized countries, local government is another arena where political parties vying for power at the national level can prove its ability to rule. When a party is out of power at the national level, it can impress the voters with an alternative political course through various activities in the local governments under its control.

The postwar local government system in Japan gives parties a lot of chances to try their policies, in spite of the centralized inter-governmental relations and weak financial basis of most local governments. In Britain, for example, local governments can do only what the law permits them to do under the doctrine of ultra vires. If they want to do something which is not legally articulated, they must ask parliament to pass local bill in order to authorize them to do it. Besides, that procedure is lengthy and expensive. In America, Dillon's rule functions in the same way as the doctrine of ultra vires. In contrast, Japanese local governments can in principle do anything the law does not prohibit them from doing.

Thus, Torazo Ninagawa, a famous leftist governor of Kyoto Prefecture, was able to implement his original subsidy program for the farmers
when the central government cut one of its agricultural subsidies. This helped him to gain more support for himself. He implemented many other policies different from the central government’s ones in such fields as education, welfare and the protection of small enterprises. He was originally backed by the JSP but the JSP’s ineptitude made him a pro-JCP politician later. He was in office for 28 years continuously. The JCP in Kyoto prefecture succeeded in raising its share of the votes under the umbrella of a sympathetic prefectural government (see Figure 2).

Another example may be more suggestive. In a small village in the northern part of Japan, there was a talented politician named Masao Fukazawa. He was born in Sawauchi Village in Iwate Prefecture, elected to mayor of the village in 1957 and died in office in 1965.

In the 1950s, Sawauchi Village, just as most of other villages in Japan’s backward areas, was very poor and ordinary people were leading a very precarious life. Above all, many infants and old people were in poor health, partly because most villagers were too poor to see a doctor as often as necessary, and partly because the health administration did not function well. When Fukazawa took office, the infant mortality in the village was 6.96 percent, that is, 7 out of 100 newly born babies died before

![Figure 2: Share of Voters in General Elections](image)

--- JSP and JCP in Kyoto Prefecture

23
their first birthday. Today, the average rate in Japan is about 0.6 percent.

Fukazawa endeavored to improve this state of affairs. He instituted a
free medicine system for infants and people older than 60 by subsidising
the national health insurance system, though the village's financial
margin was narrow. Sawauchi Village was the first local government in
Japan which exempted the weak from medical expenses. On the other
hand, he improved the public health nurse system, introduced preventive
care organizations into the local communities, equipped the only hospital
managed by the village with more facilities, and did a lot of other things.
Following his activities, the infant mortality dropped remarkably, and
was finally reduced to zero in 1962. However, the municipal finances did
not go into the red, except for during the earliest period of his
administration.\(^{(37)}\)

Fukazawa's remarkable achievements in Sawauchi impressed many
socialist politicians, though he himself was neither pro-socialist nor
pro-conservative. The socialists started to adopt similar policies to
exempt the needy from medical fees when they came into power at the
local level in the late '60s and in the early '70s. This won them consider-
able popularity. The leftist success in the field of welfare policy forced the
LDP government at the national level to reconsider its economy-oriented
policies. Anyway, Fukazawa presented a feasible alternative to Japanese
politics in the midst of the age when economic values overwhelmed
almost everyone else.

The JSP often succeeded in attaining power at the local level. Several
prefectures were, or are, governed by JSP-backed or pro-JSP governors,
though most of them did not succeed in staying in office for a long time
(see Table 1). At the municipal level, many more local governments were,
or are, ruled by socialists or pro-socialists. Therefore, if the JSP had fully
learned the cases of Ninagawa and of Fukazawa and had more creatively
and effectively managed local governments under its control, it could
have enjoyed more support of the voters. However, the JSP was rather indifferent to local government activities apart from getting in power. For example, the JSP's platform formulated in 1955 made no reference to local government problems. It was possible for the JSP to invent unique and practicable policies for local governments in its early stages. In fact, many progressive local governments succeeded in developing excellent welfare and environmental policies later, though many of them could not stay in power long enough to entrench themselves against conservative attacks.

Why was the JSP rather indifferent to the possibility of local democracy? Did the left wing, which was sympathetic to Marxism, scorn decentralization? Such questions could be raised, but in fact very few Japanese understood the significance of the chapter concerning local autonomy when the new constitution was under discussion. The failure of the JSP was that it did not succeed in making practical use of opportunities it was given. In contrast with the JSP, the conservatives successfully adapted themselves to the newly decentralized local government system using central control effectively. They did not welcome the new system but were quite shrewd in utilizing it pragmatically.

6. Left Wing Dominance and Organizational Fallacy

When the JSP was formed, it was the right wing that led the party. In the 1940s right-wing Diet members outnumbered the left-wing and they formed the Katayama government in spite of the skeptical attitude of the left wing. But the dominance of the right wing did not last long. The left wing, being a minority at the national level, soon began to increase in force at the local level. And local activists unsatisfied with right-wing leadership strived to send left-wing delegates to JSP's national conventions. Besides, Sokyo militants, who supported the left wing, joined the JSP one after another. In the meantime, the right lost such influential leaders as Hirano and Nishio in 1948. Hirano was purged by GHQ and Nishio was expelled from the party owing to the Shoden Scandal.

The left-wing advance intensified the conflict within the JSP. The left succeeded in defeating the right in the election for the secretary general
in 1950, though a right-wing leader was reelected to chairman of the central executive committee (CEC) at the same time. At the seventh convention in January, 1951, the left-wing delegates clearly outnumbered the right. Finally, the left also overwhelmed the right in the House of Representatives. Since then, the left wing has more or less dominated the JSP till Masatsugu Ishibashi was elected to Chairman of the CEC in 1983.

Why did the left wing come to dominate the JSP so rapidly? Several answers can be given. First, the right was crippled by the purge of some influential leaders like Jotaro Kawakami, later Chairman of the CEC. They could not act freely either to increase their own followers or to organize people sympathetic with moderate social democracy in general. In contrast with the right, the left wing had only one purge.

Second, the background of the right-wing leaders must be questioned. Most can be divided into three categories: leftist intellectuals, leaders of the prewar labour movement, and leaders of the prewar tenant farmers movement. Except for the intellectuals, they tended to lead the movement in a kind of paternalistic style: they often formed a small inner circle in which they behaved authoritatively. The relationship between the leaders and their followers resembled the so called “Oyabun-Kobun” (boss-henchman) relationship or patron-client one. They were also inclined to regard the seniority system as important. Needless to say, such an old-fashioned style of leadership was unacceptable to the younger generation, especially in the postwar labour movement. That is said to be one of the main reasons why left-minded activists such as Minoru Takano took control of Sôhyo, the largest organization in the labour movement. He looked self-controlled and intellectual enough to attract many younger activists.

Third, Sôhyo positively supported the left wing after 1952. Sôhyo was established in 1950 and GHQ supported it at first; it was expected to develop into a moderate labour movement. The leadership of Sôhyo, however, was easily taken over by the left, the first leader of which was Takano. Sôhyo was rather tightly organized and successfully controlled its members. Compared with Sôhyo, right-oriented trade unions, which supported the right wing of the JSP, were smaller and more loosely organized.
Fourth, the reaction against the disastrous war pushed many Japanese towards Marxism or other forms of radical socialism. Against the background of wartime destruction, the yet unrealised, more or less utopian, socialist world attracted them. It was a rather general phenomenon that the left-wing forces increased their strength just after the Second World War: in Italy and French, the communist parties advanced, and even in England, the Labour Party took over the government in spite of the tactful leadership of Sir Winston Churchill during the War. In Japan, some people, especially intellectuals, were deeply fascinated with the JCP. But the JCP almost destroyed itself as a result of its dream of a violent revolution. Moreover, prewar governments implanted fear to the communism in the masses so successfully that the JCP was heavily handicapped. Instead of the JCP, the left wing of the JSP, which included an indigenous sect of Marxism called “Ronoha,” attracted those who were not satisfied with the present state of Japan.

Finally, however, the Japanese communists radicalized the JSP in a sense. Until the defeat of Japan, communists had been almost the only force that bravely resisted militarism. Some communists were murdered by the police and some were under detention for more than ten years. Moreover, they anticipated the defeat of Japan with scientific analysis. In contrast, socialists were helpless. Most of them did not dare to fight against military dominance; some of them even supported the invasive war policies of the government. This difference with the communists engendered a kind of inferiority complex in their minds. Thus, “the burden of history” incessantly weighed on the JSP and radicalized it.

Anyway, the leftward swing of the JSP brought the party some difficulties because left-wing activists were apt to be too idealistic. Most of them believed in the “Ronoha” doctrine, which was rather idealistic and a kind of Marxism. They were also affected by anarcho-syndicalisme. They believed that their most important mission was not to improve the miscellaneous things of everyday life, but to fight against Japanese monopolistic capitalism for all the working classes. They intended to convert Japan into a socialist country within a short period after winning a majority in the Diet and to govern this country through parliamentary democracy. Nevertheless, they did not attach enough importance to the
parliamentary struggle. Their way of thinking is typically found in Mosaburo Suzuki’s assertion. Suzuki was one of the top leaders of the left wing and was Chairman of the CEC of the JSP between 1955-60. He said as follows:

Whenever the possibility of the JSP to participate in a coalition becomes a significant political issue, that is not simply because the JSP is one of major parties in the Diet, but also because any government, without the participation of the JSP, cannot enjoy enough support among all the working people who constitute 95 per cent of the whole nation; most people will always find the party indispensable to a stable cabinet. The weight of the JSP in any coalition government will always be heavy, whether the number of the seats in the Diet be big or small; in other words, the JSP always has a kind of qualitative significance.

In his opinion, it is socialists, probably Marxist socialists, that “really” represent all the working classes. The left-leaning socialists always dreamed of a promising future, assuming that there were massive working people who *latent*ly supported the JSP even though not at the poll stations. Following this view, they were apt to think more of mass movements outside the Diet than of actions inside the Diet. They regarded the election as only one of the means to achieve the revolution.

Such mass-movement-oriented strategy sometimes gave the JSP considerable veto power. But at the same time, it made the party look unconstructive. Some people began to hold a stereotyped image that the JSP opposed everything. Moreover, the activists and the Diet members belonging to the left wing often considered it a compromise with the monopolistic capital to search for and offer feasible or realistic alternatives to governmental policies through activities in the Diet. The leftward swing of the JSP seems to have somewhat deprived the party of its capacity to cope with real society.

Nevertheless, it is dangerous to exaggerate the negative effects. For it is at least certain that many people voted for the JSP because they had
a high opinion of its non-armament and absolute neutralism policy in the
diplomatic sphere. People were still obsessed with the nightmarish
memories of the war. And in the 1950s, the left wing of the JSP was
almost the only force that clearly rejected any form of Japanese rearma-
ment. In the right wing, there were some who rather positively supported
the rearmament policy and the US-Japan Security Treaty.

Above all, it was the left wing that contributed to the JSP’s recovery
from the defeat in the 1949 general election (Table 2 and 3). The left-
wing’s rate of increase in the number of seats in the Lower House was
always higher than that of the right during the 1950s. In those days, the
right wing was comparatively strong in the metropolitan areas but weak
in rural areas. But the left wing advanced in both areas. The success in
rural areas explains its rapid advance. And it was, in turn, Sohyo which
helped the growth of the left.

The JSP did not, and does not, have its own mass organization to
develop effective election campaigns by itself. The number of the JSP’s
member has been under seventy thousand, usually forty or fifty thousand
except for a short period just after the war when it was around a hundred
thousand. Besides, there were no JSP’s branches in two thirds of all the
municipalities in the 1950s. It was impossible for the party to obtain

Table 2. Socialist M.P.s belonging to Each of the Right and the Left Wings
of the JSP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1951</th>
<th>1952</th>
<th>1953</th>
<th>1955</th>
<th>1958</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Right</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* calculated by Tokyo Shimbun

Table 3. Support and Share of Electorate (JSP) during its Division (1951-55) (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Share</th>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Share</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
more than ten million votes with such weak organizational power. Hence, it has been very important for the JSP to have other outside organizations to gather votes. But the JSP could find almost no such organization other than the trade unions. And Sohyo has been the most important among the labour force. It supported especially the left wing at least in the 1950s.

Sohyo included, and includes, the strong trade unions in the public sector, which were given the general name of Kankoro. Kankoro unions such as the railway workers' unions and the postal union are ubiquitous in most parts of the country. This is to say that the left wing has powerful supporting organizations in rural areas as well as in urban areas. The local branches of the Sohyo consisting mainly of Kankoro workers campaigned actively for the JSP, especially for the left wing candidates. A journalist reported about union-supported campaigns of the left wing around 1953 as follows:

The Local campaign headquarters of the JSP are established based on local branches of Sohyo.... In most cases, both are the same organizations. The Sohyo branches financially back up the left-wing candidates and mobilize volunteer workers for the campaigning.

At a branch of the Workers' Union of the National Railway, they have a list of all the member workers. The name of the workers are classified according to their addresses. And their addresses are, in turn, grouped systematically into their constituencies. That list is crucially useful in election campaign activities.87

Besides money and campaign organizations, Sohyo provided the JSP, especially its left wing, with human resources: party members and candidates. For instance, 52.7 per cent of the JSP members were workers in 1958.88 In the same year, 29 per cent of the JSP's members of the Lower House were from trade unions, though the percentage was only 13.5 in 1952 (excluding prewar leaders of the labour movements).89 The number of Diet members from the trade unions in the JSP continued to increase gradually throughout the 1950s and the 1960s (see Figure 3). Thus, the
It must be noted that the left-wing advance in rural areas did not mean its ideological permeation. As mentioned in section 1, considerable part of Japanese rural people were too conservative to accept socialist ideology easily. But, at the same time, they did not necessarily committed themselves strongly with the conservative parties or specific policies. Roughly speaking, some of them voted for conservative candidates only because they were asked to do so by someone else, often local notables who were conservative in a political sense almost without exception. They respected human networks which were in many cases under the influence of notables. Then, when socialists made use of such networks in electioneering, it was possible for them to obtain a number of votes in rural areas. And many Sohyo branches in rural areas did approached villagers through such networks as kinship and alumni groups, even though not so successfully as conservatives.70 Without local labour unions it would have been difficult for many socialist candidates to be elected in most rural constituencies.

Such over-dependence of the JSP on Sohyo has been incessantly criticised by various people. Masumi and Scalapino once said that Sohyo dominated both the labour movements and the JSP.71 But Sohyo did not necessarily “dominate” the JSP. The Diet members from various unions

31
belonging to Sohyo have never been integrated into a single group, or a single faction. Each of them was, and is, too dependent on his own union which had its own interests: they were representatives of their mother unions first of all. Hence it was said that the Diet members from Sohyo did not have consistent opinions in policy problems, clinging to interests of their mother organizations. Moreover, there have been few top leaders of the JSP from Sohyo so far, no Chairman of the CEC and only three secretaries generals. Masatsugu Ishibashi, Chairman of the CEC during 1983-86, to be sure, is from the postwar labour movement. But he is not a typical Sohyo-branded Diet member. He was only 30 years old when he was elected Diet member for the first time in 1953.

Another critic says: the dependence on Sohyo is one of major obstacles for the JSP to obtain more electoral support. But it is in fact the organizational power of Sohyo that has propped up the JSP. In Japan, the organization, or the social network, often plays a crucial role in elections.

The LDP, which was heavily dependent on the traditional social networks and community organizations in rural areas, lost the share of the electorate linearly in the course of the high economic growth period in which the rural population decreased steadily. The gap between the high support for the LDP at opinion polls and the LDP’s comparatively low share of the electorate in these days can, at least partly, be explained by this social network hypothesis. Since the mid-1970s, the LDP has found new supporters in urban areas but has not been necessarily able to mobilize most of them to the polling stations, probably because there has been many supporters in urban areas who are out of the social networks which are under conservative control.

On the contrary, before the end of the high economic growth period in 1973, the LDP enjoyed more support in the general elections than in opinion polls, except for a few cases, partly because it was able to make use of traditional social networks like community organizations and various kinds of interests groups (see Figure 4). That is, some people who answered they did not support any parties voted for the LDP in the elections. As for the JSP, the gap between the two indices has been quite narrow with the only exception of 1947 (see Figure 5). This probably means that the JSP has not been able to mobilize almost any networks or
organizations except for the *Sohyo* and other small trade unions.

The question is, then, not the JSP's dependence on *Sohyo* but its lack of other supporting organizations, though such overdependence might have
led to conservatization of the attitude of JSP's Diet members because some of them have been recruited according to the seniority system of Sohyo. The left wing with strong supportive organizations obtained more support in the general elections than in the opinion polls; in the case of the right wing which had only weak, if any, supporting organizations, the relation between the two indices was the reverse (see Table 3).

The JSP should have tried to find out, or create, various types of supporting organizations. The farmers' organizations have already been mentioned above. Among other possible alternatives were consumers' cooperatives, environmental movement groups, small entrepreneurs' organizations, and so forth. The JSP should have become, say, a pluralistic labour party: a kind of cadre party supported by various organizations. By doing so, moreover, it could have absorbed a wide variety of opinions and learned much more of the complicated aspects of the real world; its policies could have been more sophisticated.

The socialist politicians should have developed their own "Koenkai" organizations, too. Of course, they did have ones. But many of their organizations were small and their members were often the same as those of local Sohyo unions. Not enough socialists managed to penetrate deeply into local communities or other social networks. In contrast with the socialists, conservatives has been strenuously trying to enlarge their Koenkai. Indeed, Koenkai is the key organization in LDP Diet members' electioneering where old local communities or notables already lost their hold over local people.

However, the JSP has endeavoured to become a mass party to be independent even of Sohyo in vain. Socialists often considered the Labour Party in Britain as a typical and ideal mass party. The founders of the JSP respected it as their example to follow. On this point, Japanese political scientists should also share responsibility. They often inculcated the myth of the British Labour Party in the minds of the people: they often insisted that the Labour Party was the most developed mass party in the democratic world. Even a famous Marxist political scientist like Fukui Taguchi once criticized the JSP in comparison with the Labour Party. In Japan, where people are passive, as Hrebenar pointed out, and
reluctant to join any political party, it is very difficult to form a typical mass party. Even the LDP, which has governed Japan for more than 30 years, has not succeeded in creating its own effective mass party organization. But the LDP has been shrewd enough to rely on various supporting organizations.

Of course, the organizational power or the ability to utilize social networks does not explain completely the difference in strength among the parties: the capacity to formulate effective policies, the ability to run attractive candidates, and financial power, among others, are also important. But it is rather difficult for any party to maintain a considerable amount of votes without basic supporting organizations. In a sense, it was lack of wide range of supporting organizations that crippled the JSP. It is no wonder that very few ordinary people dared to join the party, seeing that even a large majority of the workers who devoted themselves to election campaigns for the JSP did not volunteer to obtain membership in the party.

At the 1963 general election, 26 incumbent Diet members of the JSP, including about ten leading figures, lost their seats. Most of them relied mainly upon their personal popularity and succeeded in holding their seats for a long time: they had been less dependent on the labor organizations. In their place, many candidates supported by Sohyo were newly elected. Fortunately, the total loss for the JSP was only one seat, owing to the success of those newcomers, in spite of the defeat of the influentials. Such a phenomenon had already been observed at the end of the 1950s. The plateau on which the JSP stayed during the 1960s reflected the equilibrium between the exit of some Diet members relying mainly on their own fame and the advance of the newcomers relying mainly on Sohyo.

This meant a decline of the politicians belonging to the old right wing, because many of them maintained their seats relying mainly on their own personal popularity. It was the right wing that hindered the JSP’s advance in those days. They were not diligent enough to find out and organize new supporters of the new age. Instead, what they did was just to stick to their small Koenkai.

The decline of the old right deprived the JSP of its urban character because the right wing was comparatively popular in the metropolitan
areas. In 1955, the JSP's share of the electorate in the metropolitan areas was 28 per cent and that in non-metropolitan areas was 21 per cent. The former was 20 per cent in 1963 and 10 per cent in 1969. The latter was 19 per cent and 16 per cent, respectively. Instead of the JSP (and the LDP), the CGP and the JCP gathered strength in some of the metropolitan areas in the 1960s. The CGP was backed by a strong religious organization mainly in the metropolitan areas. The JCP succeeded in organizing various kinds of people such as women, young people, small entrepreneurs and merchants, besides its own small-scaled but militant mass organization.

See Figure 6 to 8. Each of them shows the change of the JSP's share of both the electorate and the absolute number of votes the party won at the general elections in three different areas, that is, in two typical metropolitan areas (the one comprises Tokyo and Kanagawa Prefecture and the other consists of Kyoto, Osaka and Hyogo Prefecture) and in one typical

Figure 6 Votes for the JSP and its Share of the Electorate in Tokyo and Kanagawa Prefectures (in general elections)
Those figures suggest that though in the metropolitan areas the voters increased rapidly during the 1960s, the JSP was unable to catch up with this growth. The party at best maintained the support only of those whom it had secured by the end of the 1950s. In Metropolitan Tokyo, it lost some of the non-organized voters who used to vote for it supporting the non-armament policy, or being attracted by the personalities of the old type candidates. Anyway, the gap between the number of the whole registered voters and the JSP’s party vote widened, namely, the JSP’s share of the electorate dropped sharply. On the contrary, the party for the most part kept both the voters themselves and the share of the electorate it had obtained in the 1950s in rural areas where population did not increase so much. The decline of the JSP is mainly reducible to its comparative setback in the metropolitan areas.

![Figure 7 Votes for the JSP and its Share of the Electorate in Osaka, Kyoto and Hyogo prefectures (in general elections)](image-url)
Conclusion

During the 1950s and the 1960s, Japan underwent a sort of upheaval. A rather agricultural society was transformed almost overnight into a post-industrial society. A number of people who used to live in rural areas rushed into the metropolitan areas. Japan became one of the most urbanized countries in the world. And the gross national product (net) in 1975 was 5.4 times as large as that in 1955. Following this drastic change in Japanese society, the Japanese political map changed, too. The two major parties, the LDP and the JSP, more or less declined and other small parties advanced. Nevertheless, the LDP remained in power through this period, partly because of the ineptitude of the opposition parties, in particular, that of the JSP, and partly because the rural and conservative areas were over-represented in the Diet owing to the unfair allocation of the seats among different constituencies.

Would the JSP have had a brighter future if it had been more mature during the first half of its life? The answer could be positive, though
Japanese political culture was too conservative. Any kind of socialism, even liberalism, were apt to culturally contradictory with Japanese traditional ways of thinking. The following episode is suggestive. A young girl was appointed as assistant secretary of a trade union in Tokyo metropolitan area in 1953. When she informed her father of her assumption, he beat her severely saying that it was a disgrace to the family to have such a daughter as her. He regarded it as a sin to oppose any kind of authority. In fact, the police tried to gather information about her in her neighbourhood later, even though her union was not led by communists who were oppressed by the government in those days.\(^{(79)}\)

Political culture is, however, not always unchangeable and it was true with Japan at that time; not all the people were captured by the old way of thinking. The JSP surely had various possibilities, if not enough, to obtain more support from the voters. But they paid little attention to the outside, and wasted much energy in sterile intra-party controversies.

The leftward turn of the JSP no doubt narrowed its acceptability among the people. It also damaged its reliability because it often brought the party unrealistic attitudes. If it had been more sensitive to the various aspects of the world, it could have attracted more voters. But it would be wrong to overestimate the impact of the leftward swing upon the JSP. The past achievements of the DSP, which was established by the right wing who left the JSP in 1959, shows clearly that it is difficult for socialists or social democratic parties to obtain much support only by shifting their stance towards the right. The DSP has ever been a 5 percent party since its birth.\(^{(80)}\)

One of the major fallacies of the JSP was an organizational one. The JSP did not fully understand the political significance of outside organizations. It clung to the largest labour organization, Sokyo, and at the same time tried or pretended to try to free itself from this dependency. It dreamed of the "ideal" mass party in Japan and neglected other organizational possibilities. But depending deliberately on and representing various organizations is fruitful to a political party not only in terms of electioneering but also in terms of policy development.

The JSP should also have been more interested in power on the local
level on well as on the national level. It should have tried to form a coalition with other parties, whenever there was a chance. The governing ability of a party is one of the most important considerations for the electorate to choose among the parties. If the JSP had been more ambitious, it might have been more successful. The JSP should have endeavoured to develop the craftiness of the fox, even if it found it almost impossible to become an aggressive lion.

NOTES

1. 37 out of 42 seats were won by the Shakai-Taishu-To (the Socialists People's Party). The rest were of socialist independent.
6. Concerning the history of the JSP before the mid-60s, the following gives us detailed informations. Allan B. Cole, George O. Totten, and Cecil H. Uyehara, Socialists Parties in Japan (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1966).
9. The weakness of class consciousness among Japanese has been pointed out by various social scientists. Eg. Kikuo Nakamura ed., Gendai nihon no seiji bunke (Political Culture in Modern Japan) (Kyoto : Mineraba Shobo, 1976), pp. 24-31 ; Saburo Yasuda, Gendai nihon no kaiy i ishiki (Class

Contrary to most Japanologists, Richardson and Flanagan argue Japan has deeper cultural and value cleavages than Germany. As they assume cultural differences are minor in western countries including Germany, the cultural cleavage is deepest in Japan among developed countries. Bradley M. Richardson and Scott C. Flanagan, Politics in Japan, (Boston and Toronto : Little, Brown and Company, 1984), pp. 79, 117.


Japanese people have often regarded it as a sin to challenge orders of government. Instead of trying to oust harmful rulers, they, or at least some of them, have been apt simply to wait for coming of other good ones. See Keiichi Matsushita, Shinssei-kou (On the Politics in the New Age) (Tokyo : Asahi Shinbunsha, 1977), pp. 60-63.

Bradley M. Richardson and Scott C. Flanagan, op. cit., chs. 4-7.


Strictly speaking, influence of landlords over villagers was shrinking
during the Taisho era (1911-1925). But this did not mean they became completely powerless before the war. See Junnosuke Masumi, *Nihon seito shirō* (History of the Political Parties in Japan) (Tokyo : University of Tokyo Press, 1979), vol. 5, pp. 344-345.


34 Shigeru Yoshida was the last prime minister who was appointed without seat in the Diet under the imperial constitution. The new constitution promulgated in December, 1946, permitted only Diet members to preside over cabinets.


37 The following may be suggestive. Satomi Tani, 'Shi-cho-son gikai giin no rai kokkai giin kankei (Relationship between Municipal Councillors and Dietmen),' *The Okayama daigaku hokokukai zasshi* (The Journal of the Association of Law at Okayama University), vol. 36, no. 3 & 4 (under the same cover, 1987).

38 R. K. Beardsley et al., op. cit., pp. 405-407.

39 Ibid., pp. 441, 445.


41 In fact, the socialists, and communists, resumed the farmers’ movements.
soon after the reform. But they did so simply making use of the absolute authority of GHQ to fight resisting landlords, not managing by themselves to develop fresh new agricultural policies adjusting to the new situations after the reform. The case of Okayama prefecture well shows their neglecting policy problems. Aki Mizuno, *Okayama-ken shakai undo-shi* (History of the Social Movements in Okayama Prefecture) (Tokyo : Educational Center for Laborors, 1979), vol. 1, pp. 249-265.

The only way to improve farmers' living conditions without developing any practical agricultural policies was to have the government subsidize them. The most simple form of subsidy the socialists thought of was of course to keep rice prices under the control of the government and raise the producers' prices substantially neglecting production cost. To avoid neither budget deficit nor rise of the consumers' prices, they insisted on the cutback of war expenditures. "Heigh producers' prices," "low consumers prices," and "no rearmament" were the typical trident slogan of the JSP in those days. For example, see The Division of Farmers under the Organizational Committee of the JSP and the Policy Research Committee of the JSP, *Nogyō kiti taiyaku zenkoku nenron katsu-do ka kaiyō no sousatsu* (Summary of the National Conference Held by Rural Socialist Activists to Meet the Agricultural Crisis) (mimeo, 1958), pp. 8-9.

See Allan B. Cole et al., op. cit., pp. 401-407 for more detailed analysis of the JSP's agricultural policy.

The following may be a good example. Aki Mizuno wrote 16 volumes of the socialists movements history in Okayama prefecture. But he could not make any mention about farmers movement after 1947. There has been no American bases in this area and farmers movement almost disappeared shortly after the agricultural reform. Aki Mizuno, op. cit., vols. 13-16.

Because of these reasons, owners of local construction companies became more and more influential in electioneering activities. See Gerald L. Curtis & Masumi Ishikawa, *Doken koka nippō* (Japan : A Constructors' State) (Tokyo: Kobun-sha, 1983) ch. 1.


Precisely speaking, left wing socialists once made a rather practical program for agricultural development as a part of their general economic plan under the initiative of Hiroo Wada, who started out as a talented bureaucrat and was appointed as the minister of the Department of Agriculture and Forestry in 1946 by Shigeru Yoshida, the conservative then prime minister. This contained such a policy as building multi-purpose

40 On the early occupation policies of GHQ, see the following: Takemae Eiji, 'Early Postwar Reformist Party,' in Robert E. Ward and Sakamoto Yoshikazu eds., *Democratizing Japan* (Honolulu : University of Hawai Press, 1987), pp. 350-351.


42 Ibid., pp. 270-271.


44 On the change of the occupational policy, see Ryuji Sasaki, 'Reisen no gekika to senryo seisaku no tenkan (Escalation of the Cold War and the Changeover in the Occupation Policy),' in *Nihon rekishi*, op. cit.


46 When M. Takahashi, Professor at Kyushu University, advised him not to get in power, Katayama replied, "I agree with you in principle, Masao. But we have no choice as long as JSP is the leading party." Masao Takahashi, *Shakaito no henitsu* (Secrets of the JSP) (Tokyo: Chobun-sha, 1981), p. 34.

47 Yoshida also successfully narrowed scope for the Katayama cabinet to develop socialistic policies. Takeshi Kinoshita, *Katayama nakabun-shi-ron* (History of the Katayama Administration) (Kyoto : Horitsu Bunkasha, 1982) pp. 88-97. Of course, his decision not to participate in the coalition government cannot be explained exclusively in terms of his skillful tactics. The other reason was that he seriously took ideological difference between the JSP and his party. Masamichi Inoki, op. cit., vol. 3, pp. 300-301.

44
The fact that many notable socialists failed in the election made the defeat all the more disastrous to the JSP. Among them were former prime minister Tetsu Katayama and former vice prime minister Suehiro Nishio. 14 out of 26 Central Executive Committee members were defeated. The Editorial Division of the Monthly Review of the JSP, *Nihon shakaito no sanjiryou nen* (30 Years History of the JSP) (Tokyo : The JSP Press, 1976), p. 105.


48 In 1868, John F. Dillon, judge of the supreme court of Iowa, ruled on the matter of municipal jurisdiction. He decided that local governments had no inherent right and the scope of their jurisdiction was completely subject to will of the state. His judgement came to be accepted by all other states of America.


51 Ninagawa was elected to governor of Kyoto prefecture in 1950 for the first time and stayed in office till 1978. In the early period of his reign, he was not closely associated with the JCP. Indeed, the JCP even nominated its own candidate to oppose to Ninagawa in the 1958 gubernatorial election. Generally speaking, however, the relationship between them became more and more intimate with the passage of time. In the 1970s, many people regarded Ninagawa as a communist governor. In contrast to the JCP, the JSP in Kyoto became annoyed with the intra-party conflict over its attitude toward the governor and at last split itself in the 1974 gubernatorial election.

52 Takeo Kikuchi, *Jiban-tachi de seinen wo nemutta mura* (Small Munici-
56 See The Editing Board to Publish Books for the 40th Anniversary of the JSP, op. cit., pp. 306-314.
57 Some left wing socialists opposed themselves to JSP’s involvement with local self-government activities. They espoused so-called democratic centralization as the best way to organize socialist states. They thought local autonomy as contradictory to it. (from my interview to the secretary general of the JSP’s Okayama prefecture branch)
58 Ishikawa, op. cit., p. 27.
63 Jun-ichi Kyogoku, ‘Senso sosenkyo ni okeru tokyo kodo (Voting behavior in the postwar general elections),’ part 1, Shiso. no. 435 (Sept., 1960).
64 Takeo Hisayoshi, ‘Kakushin seido no soshiki-ryoku (Organizational Power of the Progressive Parties),’ Shiso, No. 420 (June, 1959) p. 83.
66 Hisayoshi, op. cit., p. 90.
71 It is often said Koenkai is a mass organization created by each politician. Yes. But politicians, especially conservative ones, tend to use various kind of social networks such as community organizations and alumni associations to form their own Koenkais. It is difficult for them to capture, even to know the name of, a person who is outside any social networks available for them. See Shin-ichi Kitaoka, op. cit., pp. 53-55. Left politicians’ Koenkais are apt to be made within labour unions.
46


Ibid., p. 126.

It was said that Koenkai which supported JSP Diet members comprised about ten thousand people on average. Allan B. Cole et al., op. cit., p. 246.

Ishikawa, op. cit., p. 118.

Based on my interview with her.

In Japan, defence policy has been one of the most hotly disputed issues between the conservatives and the progressivists. The DSP at first proposed the abolition of the US-Japan Security in the far feature. But it became more and more in favor of the treaty and finally supported it positively. For example, the DSP's plank in 1978 clearly declared the party stood against the abolition of the treaty. Yamato Ishigami, *Minskato* (The DSP) (Tokyo: Kyoku-sha, 1978), pp. 18-19. Tatsuo Nakano and Shigetaro Iizuka, *Shakaito, Minskato* (The JSP and the DSP) (Tokyo: Sekka-sha, 1968), pp. 223-229. As seen in this case, the DSP has been shifting its policy stance more and more towards the rightist camp.