Some Aspects of Declining Trust in the Government in Japan

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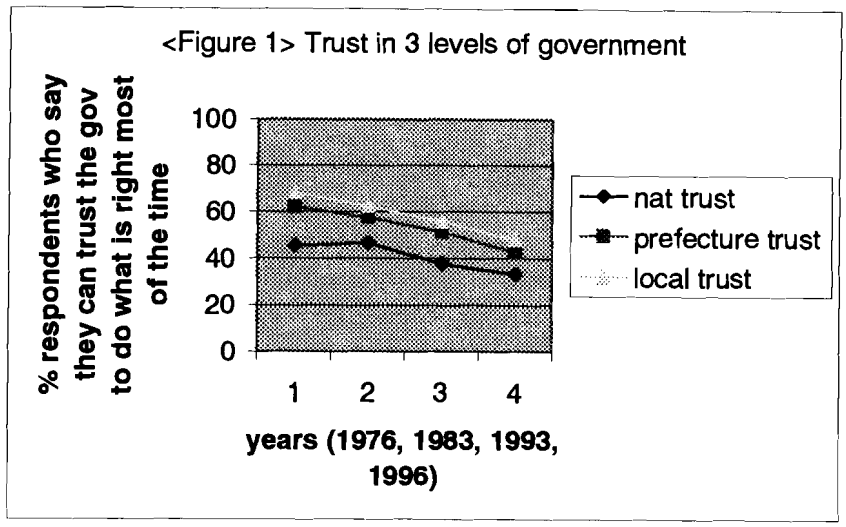
It is said that, among industrialized countries, contemporary Japanese voters trust the national government and politicians least. Indeed, a survey conducted by the Asahi-shimbun, one of the leading Japanese newspapers, found that in 1998, seventy five percent of Japanese voters thought that many politicians were corrupt, as against only thirty percent in the United States and thirty two percent in Britain[1]. *Seiji Fushin*, distrust of the government, has long been one of the main subjects in discourse on Japanese politics. Voters who look at the government with a more and more doubtful eye tend to avoid even the easiest political participation, that is, voting. In fact, the 1996 general election turnout showed a record low of fifty nine percent. Although the turnout in the general election held in June 2000, increased by three percent, it was still the second worst record of the entire Post War period.

Needless to say, political distrust among voters strikes an ominous chord for Japanese democracy ; a democratic polity requires its citizens' positive support. This implies the necessity for some interest in politics. As Dalton says, the increase of distrust of the government, or that of politics in general, means a new crisis of the democratic spirit, if not democracy itself[2]. This is the reason why I would like to analyze some aspects of voters' trust in and distrust of Japanese politics. My argument in this paper will be mainly based on the cumulative file from three main surveys conducted by political scientists, 1976 JABISS[3], 1983 JES-1[4], and 1993-96 JES-2[5].

1 . Trust in politics and the government : An Overview

All three surveys mentioned above asked their respondents how strong or weak their trust in national, prefectural, and local ("municipal") governments was. Data from the cumulative file tells us that there are



three dimensions in the attitude of respondents toward their governments (see Figure 1). First, voters' trust in government decreased at all three levels almost constantly from 1976 through 1996. The only exception was seen at the national level between 1976 and 1983. During this period, trust in the national government increased by 0.9 percent from 45.4 percent to 46.3 percent. But such a small margin might be statistically insignificant.

Secondly, voters' trust weakens in proportion to the distance between them and the government. That is, trust in the government at the local level is strongest, and then comes trust in the prefectural government. It has always been the national government that least enjoys its voters' trust. For instance, in 1976, when the degree of trust was still reasonably high, 45.4 percent of respondents mostly trusted the national government, while 61.8 percent of respondents mostly trusted the prefectural government and 67.9 percent of respondents trusted the local government.

九七

Thirdly, there was always a big gap between trust in the national government and that in the two types of regional government : Trust in the national government was not only weaker than that in the other two, but was notably lower. On average, 57.4 percent, and 52.3 percent of the respondents respectively trusted the local and prefectural governments. In

contrast to strong trust in these two, only 38.2 percent of respondents on average trusted the national government.

2. Demographics and Trust in the Government

〈Gender〉

In much research, general patterns look different when they are broken down according to other variables. This paper first examines sex. Do the two sexes differ from each other in their level of trust in the government? How far, if they really do?

In general, trust among men is higher than among women. On average, 40.9 percent of male respondents trust the national government mostly, whereas only 30.1 percent of female respondents trust it mostly. However, it is important to see the tendency of female respondents to choose the DK or NA option here. In 1976, for example, 47.1 percent of male respondents chose "mostly trust" option, and 5.1 percent of them chose DK/NA, while 36.0 percent of female respondents chose "trust mostly," and a much larger 13.8 percent of them chose DK/NA. After all, a more realistic image of the gender gap in the trust in the government can be obtained by focusing on those who do' "not trust the government at all." The percentage of male respondents who choose "not at all", that is, who do not trust the government at all, is only slightly higher than among female respondents. We can make similar remarks about voter's trust in the prefectural and local governments.

〈City Size〉

Second comes city size as a way to breakdown the figures. Japanese surveys mentioned above classify municipalities into four categories according to population size. Table 2 is a simplified crosstabulation of trust in national government broken down by year and city size.

As table 2 shows, those who reside in heavily populated areas, that is, in municipalities with populations more than 100-200 thousand, tend to have more volatile trust in the national government than those who reside in less heavily populated areas. In addition, it appears that respondents from less populated areas tend to trust the national government more

〈Table 1〉 Trust in the National Government * Year * Gender (%)
N=10,241

Sex	Degree of Trust	Year					
		1976	1983	1993	1995	1996	Average
Male	Mostly	47.1	48.0	41.9	35.2	36.4	40.9
	Sometimes	33.7	35.3	41.4	49.9	44.4	41.8
	Not trust at all	14.0	8.7	13.3	12.0	16.2	13.1
	DK, NA	5.1	8.1	3.4	2.9	2.9	4.2
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Female	Mostly	36.0	34.2	29.2	25.2	26.3	30.1
	Sometimes	36.6	42.1	37.5	54.2	47.6	45.7
	Not trust at all	13.5	7.6	17.1	13.8	18.9	14.4
	DK, NA	13.8	16.1	6.2	6.7	7.2	9.8
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

〈Table 2〉 Trust in the National Government * Year * City Size (%)
N=10,241

City Size	Degree of Trust	Year					
		1976	1983	1993	1995	1996	Total
Big Cities	Trust mostly	34.9	42.9	30.8	28.7	33.5	33.5
	Not at all	12.6	6.5	15.2	13.2	18.1	13.8
Cities over 100-200 thousand	Trust mostly	40.2	42.1	32.6	31.0	28.9	46.0
	Not at all	6.9	10.2	4.6	3.0	4.0	5.5
Cities under 100-200 thousand	Trust mostly	41.0	40.6	42.7	30.1	30.6	38.7
	Not at all	15.2	8.9	14.0	15.5	18.7	14.8
Rural area	Trust mostly	46.1	37.7	39.6	31.5	34.9	37.7
	Not at all	11.6	7.0	15.3	11.3	16.4	12.4

than those who do not.

A closer look at Table 2 gives us an interesting contrast between metropolitan and rural residents in terms of trust in the national government, other than these general trends mentioned above. Trust in the national government in the former areas sharply increased by 8.7 percent from 1976 to 1983. This is followed by a sharper decline in trust from 1983 to 1993 : During this period, trust in the national government decreased slightly by 1.4 percent, followed by a decline of 2.1 percent between 1993 and 1995, and a modest increase from 1995 to 1996.

Trust in the national government in rural areas, on the other hand, moved in the opposite direction from 1976 to 1993. It went down by 8.4 percent from 1976 to 1983, and increased by 2.1 percent from 1983 to 1993. After 1993, the trend of trust in the national government in rural areas resembled that in metropolitan areas : Trust in the national government in rural areas decreased 8.1 percent, and showed a 3.5 percent increase from 1995 to 1996.

Trends of trust in the national government among respondents residing in middle-sized and small cities are far less volatile. What is noteworthy about these two categories is that trust in the national government in cities with a population of over 100-200 thousand moved upward, like that in metropolitan areas from 1976 to 1983, while trust in the national government in small cities with under 100-200 thousand moved downward, like in rural areas during the same period. In the next ten years, by contrast, trust in the national government in the former category sharply decreased like in metropolitan areas, while that in the latter category increased by about two percent, like in rural areas during the same ten years.

These analyses suggest that the year 1983 is the turning point in the trend of trust in the national government. Before then, trust in the national government in populated areas increased, while it decreased in less populated areas. After then, we see the opposite tendency. We should try to find what makes 1983 politically unique.

The year 1983 reminds many Japanese of one of the worst corruption cases in contemporary Japan. In October 1983, the Tokyo prefectural court sentenced former Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka to a four-year

term of imprisonment for bribery as a result of so-called Lockheed Scandal, jolting the political world of Japan. Recurring corruption cases similar to the Lockheed Scandal not only made many voters angry, but also strengthened their distrust of the national government. In fact, the ruling LDP lost not a few seats in the general election held soon after the judgment against Tanaka, barely securing a majority by luring some newly elected independent politicians into the party.

The voter reaction to the lingering Lockheed Scandal continuing well beyond 1976 is, however, shows a tendency contradictory to the fluctuation of trust in the national government mentioned above. Usually, it is voters in urban areas that tend to be most resentful of corruption. And their resentment is apt to lead to distrust of politicians and the government. In rural areas, on the other hand, politicians indicted on bribery charges often get reelected in the following election. This means that corruption does not have much effect on the attitude of rural people toward politics and the government in Japan. It is unlikely, therefore, that the Lockheed Scandal sharply reduced trust in the national government in rural areas and small cities in the years argued here.

At this stage of analysis, we cannot point out the reason for the contrasting fluctuations among urban respondents and rural ones. But it might be inferred that city size, or the degree of urbanization, is one of the factors that affect the level of trust in the national government.

As for the prefectural and local governments, trust in them shows only a little fluctuation over the period examined here. It decreased constantly, with some minor exceptions, at both levels. One outstanding trend is that the more an area is populated, the less trust there is in the sub-national government. In general, distrust is not as serious at prefectural and local levels as at the national level.

九三 〈Education〉

Thirdly, the effect of education levels on trust in the government may be worth paying attention to. Simply put, the primary or lower-secondary schooling group tends to demonstrate the highest level of trust in the national government. Then comes the category of secondary schooling (high school) in many cases. The group of post-secondary, college, or univer-

sity tends to see the national government with a most distrustful eye.

Until 1983, however, such a generalized outline contains exceptions and deviations. In 1976, it is the group of secondary schooling that has the most serious distrust of the national government. In this group, only 35.1 percent of the respondents say that they mostly trust the national government. Even voters with a post-secondary, college, or university background have a little warmer attitude toward the national government.

The year of 1983 is much more exceptional. From 1976 to 1983, the level of trust in the national government increased by 4.7 percent among voters with a post-secondary, college, or university background. In the secondary-schooling group, the percentage increased by 5.4 percent. In contrast, trust in the national government among the lower secondary schooling group dropped by 6.6 percent. An irregular swing in 1976 can also be seen in trust in the prefectural government.

These contrasting fluctuations remind us of the peculiarity of 1983 in the trust trends broken down by the category of city size. In the latter case, we see a similar reversal. It is natural, therefore, that one supposes a correlation between the factor of urbanization and that of education background. In fact, Kabashima has demonstrated that the seemingly high negative effect of educational background on political participation among Japanese voters can be mostly explained by other variables like age and love for one's locality[6]. We should be cautious about what the real independent variables are that contribute to the fluctuation of trust in the national government.

Back to the effect of education on trust levels : no irregular fluctuation is found in trust in the local government. Trust decreased steadily over time. The higher the level of education attained, the less voters trusted the local government without exception. And trust in the local government is much higher than trust in the national government or the prefectural government across all education groups at anytime. It is worth analyzing, therefore, what makes the difference in 1983 between trust in the national and prefectural governments, on the one hand, and that in the local government, on the other. But the answer will not be found easily. We will need more information about the political situation in early 1980's Japan.

〈Family Income〉

The surveys analyzed here categorize the respondents into three groups according to their family income. These are i) the group occupying the bottom 24-28 percent, ii) that of the middle 49-57 percent, and iii) that of the top 17-24 percent (see Table 3). The next subject of this report is what relationship there is between trust in the government and income group.

The income group that has the lowest trust in the national government is always that of the middle 49-57 percent. This massive group counts 53.5 percent of all respondents. The trust level of the other two groups offers no consistent grading. In 1976 and 1983, the richest groups showed by far the strongest trust. That is, 48.0 and 51.7 percent respec-

〈**Table 3**〉 Trust in the National Government * Year * Education (%)
N = 10,241

Level of Education	Degree of Trust	Year				
		1976	1983	1993	1995	1996
Primary*	Mostly	46.4	39.8	39.0	37.4	37.4
	Sometimes	27.2	36.5	36.2	44.5	39.5
	Not At All	14.2	7.0	18.3	11.1	17.0
	DK, NA	12.2	16.7	6.6	7.1	6.1
Secondary**	Mostly	35.1	40.5	34.8	29.3	30.5
	Sometimes	41.7	40.7	45.4	52.9	46.1
	Not At All	13.8	8.8	15.4	13.8	18.5
	DK, NA	9.4	10.0	4.3	4.0	4.8
Post-Secondary***	Mostly	39.4	44.1	34.4	27.6	29.0
	Sometimes	43.2	39.1	49.7	56.9	51.3
	Not At All	12.0	8.4	12.0	12.7	15.5
	DK, NA	5.4	8.4	3.9	2.8	4.2

* Primary or lower-secondary schooling
** Secondary schooling (High School)
*** Post-secondary, college, or university

tively of the group members answered that they mostly trusted the national government, compared to 42.7 percent and 40.2 percent among the poorest. Then the latter group slightly led ahead of the former group in 1993 and 1995. Finally, the ranking of these two reversed in 1996 again. The fact that well-off people do not necessarily speak highly of their government, and those who least benefit from the society often have a considerably positive attitude toward the government, suggests that political trust/distrust is a matter not only of materialistic living conditions but of psychological evaluation.

Needless to say, the factor of income distribution itself is a function of other variables to some extent. We should be cautious, therefore, about the effect of this factor on trust in the government. But it is almost certain that it is the huge, disgruntled middle class or middle stratum that contributes to a lower rating of trust in the government among the entire population.

As for the two other types of government at the non-national level, political trust among those three income categories fluctuates more randomly. There is no consistent grading order over the years argued here. This might suggest that there is only a weak correlation between affluence and political trust.

〈Group Membership〉

Against our expectation, the factor of group membership does not play a big role in determining the level of trust in the government. For example, membership in community associations seems to have little (if any) effect on trust in the government at all three levels. Still, respondents' affiliation with agricultural, business, and political organizations seems, at least at a glance, to matter to some extent. The following is a rough overview of the seeming effect of group membership on trust in the government.

First, respondents who are members of agricultural cooperatives exhibit a higher level of trust in all levels of government. Their trust in the government is also more stable than among non-members. That is, the decline of trust among members is slow in general, whereas trust among non-members decreases sharply over the years. Second, membership in

political associations seems to result in a greater level of trust. Third, membership in business organizations seems to have some modest effect on trust in all three levels of government.

3. Birth-year Cohort and Trust in the Government

Age is usually seen as one of the important explanatory variables in political or sociological phenomena. Using a cumulative file, I will take a generational method of analysis here, breaking down all the respondents into birth-year cohorts. Table 4 is the cross tabulation of trust in the national government and birth-year cohort. Table 4 tells us that trust in the national government decreases steadily as the generation gets younger. Certainly, the pre-1910 generation is slightly more distrustful of

〈Table 4〉 Trust in the National Government * Year * Family Income in Three Categories (%) N=10,241

Family Income in Three Categories	Degree of Trust	Year					
		1976	1983	1993	1995	1996	Total
Bottom 24-28%	Trust mostly	42.7	40.2	40.0	37.2	34.7	38.9
	Sometimes	30.4	35.5	38.5	45.7	41.1	38.3
	Not at all	14,1	9.1	17.4	12.9	18.7	14.6
	DK NA	12.8	15.2	4.1	4.1	5.5	8.2
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Middle 49-57%	Trust mostly	39.8	37.8	34.8	30.3	30.7	34.3
	Sometimes	37.8	44.5	46.0	54.6	48.7	46.8
	Not at all	14.8	7.8	15.5	13.2	16.7	13.8
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Top 17-24%	Trust mostly	48.0	51.7	38.6	35.5	39.9	42.3
	Sometimes	35.2	32.8	50.5	54.5	45.7	44.2
	Not at all	11.6	6.5	9.3	8.0	12.6	9.9
	DK NA	5.2	9.1	1.6	2.0	1.8	3.6
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

the government than the next oldest generation. But this generation of small membership is peculiar in its big percentage of DK/NA respondents. Given such a peculiarity, the difference of 0.8 percent between the pre-1910 cohort and the 1920-19 cohort is not significant. Far more important, therefore, is the possibility that trust levels in the national government reflect respondents' generational experience. The other possibility is that voters trust the national government more and more as they get old. The following is an examination of this latter possibility (see Table 9).

〈Table 5〉 Trust in the National Government * Affiliation with Community Association * Year N=7,709

Association Membership	Degree of Trust	Year			
		1976	1983	1993	1996
Affiliated	Mostly	42.7	42.8	38.1	31.9
	Sometimes	34.3	39.5	44.1	47.2
	Not At All	13.6	7.1	14.8	16.2
Not Affiliated	Mostly	37.0	40.2	33.3	31.5
	Sometimes	37.9	36.1	44.6	47.2
	Not At All	14.0	9.1	15.5	18.7

〈Table 6〉 Trust in the National Government * Membership of Residents' or Citizens' Movement N=7,709

Association Membership	Degree of Trust	Year			
		1976	1983	1993	1996
Affiliated	Mostly	40.4	28.9	44.2	29.4
	Sometimes	36.2	42.1	32.6	49.0
	Not At All	14.9	13.2	18.6	19.6
Not Affiliated	Mostly	41.2	42.0	35.6	31.7
	Sometimes	35.7	37.9	44.6	45.8
	Not At All	13.5	7.7	15.1	17.4

〈Table 7〉 Trust in the National Government * Business Organization * Year N=7,709

Organization Membership	Degree of Trust	Year			
		1976	1983	1993	1996
Affiliated	Mostly	49.7	51.3	46.5	38.2
	Sometimes	31.5	36.1	40.0	35.9
	Not At All	12.1	5.1	11.5	21.2
Not Affiliated	Mostly	39.1	40.3	34.7	31.0
	Sometimes	36.8	38.4	44.8	46.9
	Not At All	13.8	13.0	15.5	17.1

In order to assess the effect of aging on trust in the national government, all the respondents are divided into six ten-year age groups. In Japan, the right to vote is given to anyone when he/she becomes twenty years old. This means that the youngest age-group in Table 11 consists of those voters who are in their twenties. All voters who are seventy years old or older are put together into the category "70-." This division allows us to see how voters of a category change their attitude toward the government every ten years. For example, voters in their twenties in the 1976 survey responded that they "mostly trusted in national government" at a rate of 30.7 percent. Then, in 1983, those voters were in their thirties, and responded to the same question at a 33 percent rate. Finally, we find the same voters, in their forties in 1996, "mostly trusting in the government" at a 24.5 percent rate. Unfortunately, the consecutive surveys employed here do not have data for 1986. We use, therefore, the data of 1983 as proximate substitutes.

Moving diagonally on Table 9 in the way mentioned above, we can obtain rough information of aging effects on trust in the national government. The image that Table 8 provides us is a little perplexing, though. Of six age groups of 1976, four, from the 20s through to 50s age groups, appear in 1996 as well as in 1983. The rates of the three younger groups fluctuate in a very similar fashion over the years. The percentage of those who mostly trusted the government in each category increased by a few

〈Table 8〉 Trust in the National Government * Birth-year Cohort
N=10,241

Degree of Trust	Birth-year cohorts in 10 year groups						
	pre-1910	1910-19	1920-29	1930-39	1940-49	1950-59	1960-
Mostly	50.2	51.4	48.6	37.5	32.1	26.4	20.9
Sometimes	14.1	27.5	33.3	44.1	46.8	51.5	55.8
Not at all	9.8	9.8	11.2	13.0	15.2	15.3	16.5
DK NA	25.9	11.3	6.9	5.5	5.9	6.8	6.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	255	621	1674	2320	2542	1745	1084

〈Table 9〉 Aging and Trust in the National Government (%)*

Age	Year			
	1976	1983	1996	Average**
20s	30.7	34.1	7.8	26.2
30s	33.7	33.0	20.1	27.0
40s	42.9	37.7	24.5	31.8
50s	50.7	46.3	32.7	37.2
60s	53.6	49.3	38.4	43.7
70-	48.8	54.5	48.1	50.6

* The table exclusively shows the percentage of the respondents who chose "mostly trust in the national government."
** This column shows the average of all 5 years surveyed.

percent in 1983, and decreased sharply in 1996. The other group that appears both in 1976 and 1996, that is, the 50s age group in 1976, shows a slight decline through the whole period. What the entire four groups share is that the rate of trust in the national government in 1996 is lower than that in 1976. These findings suggest that aging is not a variable with a big effect on trust in the national government[7].

How does the factor of generation, then, affect the level of trust?

What is worthy of note in this respect is that there is a recognizable difference between the youngest group and the other three in the decline of the degree of trust. The rate of decline in the 20s age group in 1976 dropped by 6.2 percent in twenty years, whereas those of the other older groups declined more mildly. More outstanding decline over years is found in another generational group than the four argued above, though this group lacks data over extended time period. Trust in the national government decreased sharply by fourteen percent from 1983 to 1996 in the 20s age group of 1983. Then comes the astonishingly low trust level of the 20s age group of 1996. The figure of 7.8 percent could be called a debacle of political trust.

Table 8 and Table 9 allow us to present the hypothesis as follows about the generational effect on trust in the national government. Voters who were born before 1940 were raised and socialized in an authoritarian atmosphere. When they were children, Japan was still a poor country, and was neither much urbanized nor highly industrialized. As often seen in such a basically agricultural society, people tended to pay unconditional respect to governmental authority. Naturally, therefore, such instilled loyalty and authoritarian inclination did not weaken easily, and remained considerably strong even in the 1990s.

Japan started the so-called period of high economic growth in the mid -1950s, and became an industrialized, and urbanized society by the end of the 1960s at the latest. Those whose adolescence coincided with the age of unprecedented economic growth and rapid social changes were born in the late 1940s and 1950s, and obtained the right to vote in the 1960s and 1970s. They were raised in a democratized society, with a liberal system of education. Thus, they became more independent in their attitude toward the government.

But, in spite of the continual improvement of living conditions, daily life was still felt to be precarious, especially after the oil crisis in 1973. This sense of instability might have brought them some concern about further materialistic improvement in their lives, and made them look forward to the government's economic policies and programs in a broad sense. As long as such an inference is appropriate, these generations had little reason to strongly distrust the government for the time being. After

all, they trusted the national government to some extent in the 1970s and 1980s, but only out of acquiescence, that is, not uncritically. When the affluent society of Japan established its credit, their concern about politics became more superficial. It was easy, therefore, for successive corruption cases to undermine their trust in the government.

Then came a new generation of voters who were born in the midst of the affluent society of contemporary Japan. Some of them show strong distrust of the government because they have seen many corrupt politicians and bureaucrats from their early childhood. In fact, the percentage of those who chose the option of "do not trust the national government at all" in the 20s age group of 1996 was 21.6 percent, an 8.4 percent decrease from 1976. But this rate is hardly outstanding in 1996 because, in this year, most generational groups were almost equally distrustful of the national government.

What was really conspicuous about the 20s age group of 1996 was that as many as 64.7 percent of respondents answered that they trusted the national government "sometimes." Given political indifference prevailing among younger people, we should be cautious to interpret their answer literally ; in that they sometimes trust the government and sometimes reject it, according to their evaluation of government's occasional performance. Their deep sympathy with post-industrial, and non-materialistic values, it may be arguable, would reduce their interest in traditional distributive and redistributive activities by the government.

Nonetheless, they know, if vaguely, that the government does do at least some things necessary to the society, and, in this sense, pay the lowest level of attention to the government activities. The low rate of DK/NA among them, 6.5 percent in 1993 and 6.0 percent in 1996, seems to endorse such an assumption. Their sporadic trust in the government can be, therefore, construed as an expression of factual recognition about governmental functions. If this is true, we should reflect on how appropriate it is to ask them a question of trust/distrust dichotomy.

Table 10 shows generational differences in trust in the government at three levels. The table tells us three interesting points. First, the level of trust in the prefectural government is higher than that in the national government, and the local government boasts the highest trust by the

〈Table 10〉 Mostly Trust * Birth-Year Cohort at Three Governmental Levels (%) N=9,377

Level	Year						
	pre-1910	1910-19	1920-29	1930-39	1940-49	1950-59	1960-
National	50.2	51.4	48.6	37.5	32.1	26.4	20.9
Prefecture	56.3	55.8	56.8	48.0	45.2	39.5	34.9
Local	57.9	59.8	61.5	53.8	50.6	42.6	40.3

respondents in all generations. Secondly, the gap between the level of trust in the national government and that in the local government widens as the generation becomes younger, with a minor exception. This means that relatively more young voters remain faithful to the local government. Thirdly, even the youngest respondents have considerably strong trust in the local government.

Why is the popularity of the local government considerably high compared to that of the national government? Do people see the politicians and bureaucrats who run the local and prefectural governments as being cleaner and less corrupt than their counterparts at the national level? Do younger voters really have sincere trust in the local government at all? Unfortunately, we do not have enough data to present convincing answers to these questions. But some remarks about those questions are still possible.

What I would like to point out first is that people prefer regional government to national government not because the former is exempt of corruption and scandal. It is unrealistic to assume that local politics is less tainted by corruption than national politics in Japan. We should, therefore, reexamine the meaning of "trust" as respondents, or at least some of them, conceive it, following the pattern that we use concerning the reason why young voters sometimes trust the national government.

The second point that should be mentioned here is that the levels of trust in all three levels of government are stable among the oldest three generations, whereas trust in the government starts to decline from the birth-year cohort 1930-39 at all three levels. We should keep it in mind

that some common factors are involved in the fluctuations of trust at all levels in spite of voters' different perception about the government at different levels.

Finally, we should find factors that explain the difference between trust in the national government and that in the local government. The fact that a significant portion of the youngest generation evaluates the local government much more highly than the national government may suggest that the visibility or tangibility of services provided by a government can affect the degree of trust in the government. Another conjecture is that young voters feel that they have more control over the local government than the national government. But we will need more information about what voters count on when they look at the government.

4. Attitudinal Factors and Trust in the Government

Attitudinal factors, as well as demographic or sociological ones, can affect trust in the government. Here, we will have to restrict myself to examining fewer variables than we had hoped.

〈Pride on the Entire Political System〉

The Japanese surveys dealt with in this report asked respondents how proud they were of democracy, of Japan. It is possible to interpret this as a question related with respondents' evaluation of the entire political system of Japan, as distinguished from the government as a steering entity, though the term "proud" is too American.

As some researchers point out, to say that voters in democratic countries tend to be satisfied with the way their government works, is different from saying that they highly estimate their democratic system of government itself[8]. But the degree of support among voters for liberal democracy can still have some influence on the level of trust in the government, directly or indirectly. Table 10 shows how the factor of pride in the system affects trust in the national government in each generation.

Table 10 suggests two outstanding tendencies. First, stronger pride in the system leads to a higher level of trust in the government. In fact, the Pearson's correlation coefficient between the two variables is 0.290,

though their partial correlation coefficient controlled for other attitudinal variables such as ideology is slightly smaller. This means that the level of trust in the government is not completely independent of voter's evaluation of the entire political system.

Second, the discrepancy between pride in the system and trust in the government becomes greater, the younger the respondent. That is, it is less probable among younger generations that greater pride in the system means stronger trust in the government. The ratio of those who are proud of the system among respondents is rather similar through generations as Table 11 shows.

〈Sense of Alienation and Trust in the Government〉

The surveys asked respondents to what extent they agreed with the view of "People like me don't have any say about what the government does." This question was evidently intended to sound them out about their sense of political effectiveness/alienation. Needless to say, one's sense of effectiveness about politics has considerable effect on his/her political attitude and behavior. Table 9 shows the generational difference in the degree of perceived alienation. Table 10, on the other hand, shows the effect of the sense of alienation on trust in the government among

〈**Table 11**〉 Trust in the Government * 10 Year Cohort * System Pride (%) N=9,377

Proud of System	Degree of Trust	Generation						
		-1910	1910 -19	1920 -29	1930 -39	1940 -49	1950 -59	1960-
Proud	Mostly	84.1	76.1	66.0	54.7	48.7	42.0	39.2
	Not*	4.5	3.7	3.7	8.5	9.0	10.4	13.7
Somewhat	Mostly	63.0	57.9	52.8	39.6	35.4	28.9	23.6
	Not*	9.9	5.0	8.5	10.2	11.3	12.1	10.3
Not Proud	Mostly	25.0	34.7	34.0	25.1	17.3	15.8	12.4
	Not*	27.5	23.1	22.1	21.9	25.9	23.4	27.6

* N=Not At All

generations.

As Table 10 shows, the strength of the sense of political alienation/effectiveness does not differ much among generations. This may mean that generational factors do not affect the sense of alienation/effectiveness.

Table 11 offers two interesting points. First, it is obvious that the strength of the sense of alienation/effectiveness hardly has any effect on the level of trust in the government in any generation. The distribution pattern of trust levels through generations is almost the same, regardless of the intensity of the sense of alienation as reflected in the survey data.

〈**Table 12**〉 System Pride * 10 Year Cohort (%) N=10,026

Pride	Generation						
	-1910	1910 -19	1920 -29	1930 -39	1940 -49	1950 -59	1960-
Proud	17.3	18.5	19.1	18.1	16.7	13.5	11.2
Somewhat	32.3	40.2	49.0	49.3	49.6	53.4	55.0
Not Proud	15.7	20.4	19.7	22.6	24.4	23.8	24.0
DK/NA	34.8	20.9	12.2	10.0	9.3	9.3	9.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

〈**Table 13**〉 Sense of Alienation * Generation (%) N=10,028

Sense	Year						
	-1910	1910 -19	1920 -29	1930 -39	1940 -49	1950 -59	1960-
Alienated*	49.6	56.8	59.9	57.6	56.4	55.3	60.9
Cannot Say	6.7	11.3	10.5	12.2	13.8	15.1	15.7
Not Alienated**	15.0	19.5	25.3	25.3	26.3	25.1	22.0
DK/NA	28.8	12.3	4.2	4.9	3.5	4.6	1.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

* Alienated = Agree + Slightly Agree

** Not Alienated = Slightly Disagree + Disagree

〈Table 14〉 Trust in the Government * Cohort * Alienation, Partial (%)

Sense of Alienation	Year						
	1910	1910 -19	1920 -29	1930 -39	1940 -49	1950 -59	1960-
Alienated Mostly	51.0	53.5	47.8	36.0	30.6	26.4	20.1
Sometimes	16.7	30.3	34.0	44.7	49.2	51.1	55.0
Not At All	10.8	8.4	11.9	14.3	14.8	17.1	17.6
Not Say* Mostly	50.0	43.3	41.4	37.8	36.3	24.0	17.4
Sometimes	25.0	28.3	42.8	46.2	44.1	55.4	62.9
Not At All	8.3	15.0	11.8	10.8	14.2	13.3	16.2
Not Alie** Mostly	55.2	52.4	56.9	41.3	32.3	24.5	25.4
Sometimes	17.2	28.2	27.9	41.9	48.4	55.9	56.6
Not At All	10.3	14.6	11.2	12.5	16.1	15.9	14.0

* Not Say = Cannot Say
** Not Alie = Not Alienated

〈Table 15〉 Trust in the National Government * Ideology * Year
N=5,049

Ideology 5 Point Scale	Degree of Trust	Year		
		1983	1993	1996
Progressive (Liberal)	Mostly	29.9	14.6	17.4
	Not At All	32.8	37.8	39.1
Somewhat Progressive	Mostly	30.3	25.1	18.2
	Not At All	10.8	19.6	23.1
Neutral	Mostly	40.2	36.9	30.9
	Not At All	8.3	13.3	14.5
Somewhat Conservative	Mostly	55.1	44.5	47.5
	Not At All	2.7	8.6	10.8
Conservative	Mostly	55.9	60.4	53.7
	Not At All	1.2	8.6	10.8

Second, there is a consistent tendency that younger generations like the option of "sometimes," regardless of their sense of alienation. We should analyze such lukewarm attitudes among younger generations.

〈Ideology〉

In general, progressive groups hold the lowest level of trust in the national government for all years, whereas, the conservative group holds the highest level of trust in the national government. In fact, the conservative camp trusted the national government more than the progressive camp by 29.7 percent on average. At the same time, the neutral group had a stable decrease between 1983 and 1996. Unfortunately, the survey in 1976 lacked a question about the ideological preference of respondents.

These differences show that there is an obvious correlation between trust levels and ideology. In fact, the conservative group shows the highest level of trust in all governments. Still, it should be noticed that trust in the government continued to decrease even in the conservative camp.

Conclusion

This study has examined several factors that can affect the level of trust in the government. Among demographic variables, urbanization and education have turned out to be important. But some demographic factors such as gender and affiliation with social, or economic organizations do not have much effect on the level of trust in the government.

Difference among the level of trust in three types of government may tell something about voters' evaluation criteria about the trustworthiness of the government. Our findings suggest that the visibility and familiarity of services provided by a government affect trust in the government. In terms of attitudinal, or psychological factors, trust in the whole political system and ideology have some effect on the level of trust in the government.

Generational experiences of voters have considerable effect on the level of trust in the government. Old generations tend to trust the government unconditionally. Younger generations, on the other hand, are more

colleted toward the government; they appreciate the necessity and usefulness of the government, but they still think that unreliable people often run it in an arguable way.

What makes us feel relieved to some extent in this study is that the decrease of trust in the government does not necessarily means the crisis of the entire political system of a country; people still highly evaluate the democratic way and institutions of governing. But we should keep asking whether a further decline of trust in the government erode voters' faith in democracy itself.

1) Asahi Shimbun Tokubetsu Shuzaihan, *Seijika-yo* (What to expect for politicians to do and not to do), Tokyo, Asahi Shimbun-sha, 2000, p. 9.

2) Russell J. Dalton, "Value Change and Democracy," Susan Pharr and Robert Putnam, eds., *Disaffected Democracies : What's Troubling the Trilateral Countries?"* Princeton, NJ : Princeton University Press, 2000, p. 253.

3) JABISS is a nationwide panel survey conducted by Scott C. Flanagan, Shinsaku Kohei, Ichiro Miyake, Bradley M. Richardson, and Joji Watanuki in the 1976 general election. The outline of the survey is concisely described in a book written by them. Flanagan et al., *The Japanese Voter*, New Haven : Yale University Press, 1991, pp. 7-9.

4) JES-1, or simply called JES, is a panel survey conducted by Ichiro Miyake, Joji Watanuki, Takashi Inoguchi, and Ikuo Kabashima in 1983 when an Upper House election and a general election were held one after another in the same year. See the following book by them to obtain the outline of the survey. Miyake et al., *Nihonjin no Senkyo Koudou* (Voting behavior of Japanese voters), Tokyo : The University of Tokyo Press, 1986, pp. 287-293.

5) JES-2 is a series of panel surveys conducted before and after the 1993 general election, in 1994, immediately after the 1995 Upper House election, and before and after the 1996 general election by Ichiro Miyake, Joji Watanuki, Ikuo Kabashima, Yoshiaki Kobayasi, and Ken-ichi Ikeda. The outline of the survey is in Ikuo Kaashima, *Seiken Kotai to Yukensha no Taido Hen-yo* (Power shift and attitudinal change of Japanese voters), Tokyo : Bokutaku-sha, 1998, pp. 5-16.

七七 6) Ikuo Kabashima, *Seiji Sanka* (Political participation), Tokyo : The University of Tokyo Press, 1988, ch. 5.

7) Kobayashi says that age is one of the most important factors that affect the degree of trust in the government, though he does not use a cohort way of analysis in his argument about the effect of age on political trust. Yoshiaki Kobayashi, *Gendai Nippon no Seiji Katei* (Governmental process in contemporary Japan), Tokyo : The University of Tokyo Press, 1997, pp. 215-220. We should examine our contradictory conclusions farther more.

8) Robert D. Putnam, Susan J. Pharr, and Russell J. Dalton, "*Introduction : What's Troubling the Trilateral Democracy?*" in Pharr and Putnam, *op. cit.*, p. 7 ; Robert A. Dahl, "A Democratic Paradox?" *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 115, no.1, 2000.

〈Note of Appreciation〉

The data analyzed here are based on three major surveys mentioned in the introductory part of this paper. The names of scholars who conducted those time-and-intellectual-energy-consuming surveys are shown in footnotes 3 through 5. I greatly appreciate that they have allowed other researchers to use their data available through Leviathan Data Archive in Tokyo.

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