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The Diffusion of Power in the Diet*

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1. Introduction

Since the 1990s the Liberal Democratic Party (hereafter LDP) has become unable to maintain a stable majority in the Japanese Diet, and negotiations between political parties have been an essential element of the lawmaking process. In 1989 the LDP lost its majority in the House of Councillors (Upper House) for the first time since the mid-1950s. Following the split in the party, the LDP fell short of winning a majority in the House of Representatives (Lower House) in the 1993 general election. Such a change is considered as a decrease in the stability of power, which may have a substantial consequence on legislative activities. For instance, one may expect that the likelihood of a bill to pass the Diet decreases, given an unstable legislative majority. On the other hand, it may increase if the government refrains from submitting a bill that invites parliamentary disunion. Moreover, because of the necessity for coalition building, opposition parties may or may not become more supportive of government legislation, as compared to the period when a single-party commands a majority in both houses of the Diet. In this paper, I focus on the likelihood of legislative support, and examine how

the political change in the 1990s affected the way in which the Diet makes laws.[1]

There is growing controversy over what function the Diet should perform. Many scholars argue that the institutional design of the Diet necessitates interparty accommodation and makes the legislative process more "viscous" than it appears. In a variant of this view, the government is expected to become more accommodating to the opposition as the majority's parliamentary strength declines. Those who place emphasis on the parliamentary consultation at the individual legislation level, expect that political parties agree more on legislation as greater the degree of interparty interaction becomes.

In contrast, some argue that the Diet institutionally grants a parliamentary majority the prerogative to take control of legislative agendas. It is the institutional function of the Diet that the legislative-administrative relationship is structured in the way that bureaucrats internalize the parliamentary preference and initiate legislation acceptable to the Diet. From this perspective, some bills that political parties agree on may reach the voting stage taking little time, while others that parties disagree over may take between a matter of days to a matter of months to be voted on. Thus, whether or not a party supports a government bill is distributed heteroskedastically over the legislative process, and the party positions converge on the opposing votes as time passes in parliamentary deliberation.

One of the two goals I seek in this paper is to clarify which of these views captures the reality of lawmaking. To be concrete, I focus on how long it takes for a bill to reach the voting stage, and statistically examine the relationship between such "legislative time" and the likelihood of a party to support government legislation. At the same time, I pay attention to the interparty interaction that may or may not become greater as deliberation time passes. Since the government and the opposition may

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1) With respect to the likelihood of a bill to pass the Diet, see Masuyama (2000a, 2000b, and 2003).

not necessarily interact along with an increase in "legislative time," it is critically important to understand the relationship between "legislative time" and the likelihood of legislative support, by taking into account the possibility that the party positions are heteroskedastically distributed over the legislative process.

The second goal in this paper is to identify the legislative consequence of the increased power instability in the 1990s. The analysis will show that, with the exception of the Communists (JCP), the opposition parties became fully supportive of government legislation by the early 1990s. Prior to the period of coalition governments, the trend toward consensual decision making was already established when the LDP lost its majority in the Upper House. Since then, negotiations between political parties became an essential element of the lawmaking process, and the parties of centrists and social democrats came to play a pivotal role in coalition building, shifting the range of government legislation in their favor.

The paper proceeds as follows. First, I briefly review the arguments regarding the parliamentary accommodation developed in the postwar Diet. To test the competing theories of parliamentary politics, the sections to follow focus on estimating the likelihood of an opposition party to support government legislation. In a concluding section, I summarize findings and discuss the legislative consequence of the increased power instability in the 1990s.

2. Parliamentary Accommodation

Mochizuki (1982) argues that the institutional design of the Diet necessitates interparty accommodation and makes the legislative process more "viscous" than it appears.[2] In his view, (1) relatively short sessions, (2) decentralized committees, (3) bicameralism, and (4) the unanimity norm in parliamentary management, are the key institutional

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2) Blondel (1970) defines "viscosity" as the ability of a legislature to block, delay, or alter government proposals.

devices that facilitate opposition participation and legislative viscosity. According to Mochizuki, the accommodation norm was already established at the beginning of the 1960s when the LDP began to occupy a predominant status while opposition fragmentation steadily continued (pp. 426-429).

In contrast, Krauss (1984) argues that the downward trend in the LDP's electoral strength gradually facilitated the evolution of consultation between political parties. Legislative negotiations were increasingly held at extra-parliamentary meetings in the 1960s, and at the formal parliamentary consultations in the 1970s. By the mid-1970s, the time known as the era of power balance, the electoral decline of the LDP created a situation in which, while commanding a majority in both houses, the LDP was unable to retain a majority in several standing committees, necessitating further accommodation with the opposition. According to Krauss, the establishment of a consultation norm can be found in (1) the recognition of minority rights, (2) the specialized procedural authority, and (3) the norm of restrained partisanship.[3]

Assuming that parliamentary accommodation imposes a constraint on the ability of the government to initiate legislation, whether facilitated by a contraction of the majority or the institutionalization of cooperative culture, one can expect the content of legislation to be conditioned by the preference of opposition parties in the Diet. By analyzing the party positions for the period 1965 through 1979, Mochizuki shows that opposition parties, with the exception of the JCP, agreed with the LDP in more than 70 percent of the cases. According to Mochizuki, the reason that the rate of interparty agreement remained at a relatively high level is that the government and the opposition adjusted their differences before the legislative proposals being formally submitted to the Diet. Since the rate of agreement was mostly high throughout the period studied, Mochizuki concludes that the institutionalization of interparty accommodation preceded the LDP's chronic decline in parliamentary seats (pp. 288-292).

3) See Richardson (1997, Ch.6) for a recent treatment.

Figure 1 depicts the rate of agreement on government legislation by the four major opposition parties during the period under the LDP single -party government.[4] The figure confirms the argument made by Mochizuki for the period through the 1970s. However, the agreement rate of JCP returned to the 30 percent level and that of the Socialists (JSP) decreased somewhat significantly in the mid-1980s. Taking into account that the LDP had to form a coalition with the New Liberal Club (NLC) due to the 1983 election,[5] the agreement rate in the 1980s also runs counter to the expectation by those who place emphasis on the power balance in the Diet. Moreover, with the exception of the JCP that manifests a substantial change in the rate of agreement, there is no statistically significant relationship between the agreement rate and the LDP seat share in the Lower House.[6]

Departing from the tradition of aggregate analysis, Fukumoto (2000) looks at the pattern of the party positions at the individual legislation level. To be concrete, he conducts a statistical analysis on the data set consisting of all postwar government legislation, and shows that the number of parties to oppose a government bill is positively related to the number of committee meetings during which the bill in question is deliberated (pp. 26-27). Contrary to the accommodation mechanism assumed by Mochizuki and Krauss, Fukumoto argues that the opposition gains legislative and non-legislative benefits by entering into an intense

4) The party positions are based on the Lower House plenary votes on government legislation from budgetary sessions. A budgetary session is defined as the Diet session in which the annual budget is deliberated. The plenary votes are compiled by the Lower House Secretariat.

5) The NLC consisted of several Diet members who seceded from the LDP in the 1970s.

6) For the major opposition parties, correlation coefficients (p-values) between the agreement rate and the LDP size in the Lower House are estimated to be -0.404 (0.022) for the JCP, 0.145 (0.391) for the JSP, -0.125 (0.503) for the Democratic Socialists (DSP), and -0.140 (0.496) for the Clean Government Party (CGP).

FIGURE 1
Government-Opposition Agreement Rate on Government Legislation
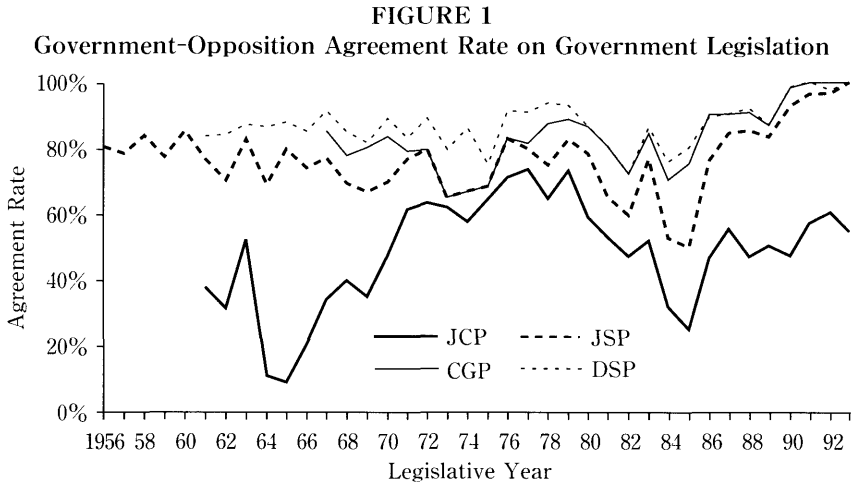
discussion, rather than by obstructing the parliamentary business (p. 57).

While making a major step forward, Fukumoto's approach also needs to be reconsidered. First, he uses the number of opposing parties relative to a total number of existing parties, as a measure of the degree of interparty disagreement. Although his index reasonably measures the relative number of opposing parties, it substitutes an interval measure for the "degree" of opposition, and ignores the information regarding "which" party to oppose. Furthermore, his image of the Diet as an intense deliberative body is logically inconsistent with his finding that the greater the degree of deliberation, the more a party becomes "less" supportive of government legislation. Given the inverse relationship between legislative deliberation and interparty agreement, we must wonder why the majority is willing to take time in deliberating government bills, only to increase the number of opposing parties.

With regard to the explanatory variable, Fukumoto uses the number of days that a committee holds a meeting to deliberate a bill in question, instead of the number of days the bill takes to reach the voting stage. The rationale for his choice is that the former is assumed to reflect the degree of "substantial" deliberation, excluding the time that is wasted

due to the opposition's delaying tactics. However, his measure also suffers from what he thinks the problem of the number of days. Holding a committee meeting does not necessarily raise the level of "substantial" deliberation, if the negotiations under the table facilitate the consultation between political parties. Thus, whether we define legislative time by the number of meetings or days, it is important to keep in mind that interparty interaction may or may not increase as time passes in the legislative process.

In short, the postwar development of parliamentary accommodation has been regarded to impose constraints on the ability of the government to initiate legislation, and to facilitate legislation contingent on the preference of the Diet. However, the rate of legislative agreement between the government and the opposition is relatively stable over time, with the exception of the JCP, and it is difficult to determine how the majority's parliamentary strength affects the position of opposition parties on government legislation. At the individual legislation level, there is an analysis examining the relationship between the number of opposing parties and the degree of legislative deliberation, although it has drawbacks in model specification and variable operationalization.

3. Modeling Legislative Support

In order to test the competing theories of legislative interaction, and to identify the legislative consequence of the increased power instability in the 1990s, I conduct a statistical analysis to estimate the likelihood of an opposition party to support government legislation, taking into account the interparty interaction that may or may not increase over the course of legislation.

I use a dummy variable to model the dichotomy of legislative sup-port. SUPPORT is defined as 1 if an opposition party supports a govern-ment bill and 0 if otherwise. The unit of analysis is each party position recorded on a government bill.[7] Therefore, the number of observed

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7) See footnote 4 for the data description.

party positions on a given bill is equal to the number of opposition parties that cast a vote on the bill in question in the Lower House. A probit model is adopted for maximum likelihood estimation with the dichotomous dependent variable of legislative support. Given the JCP as a reference party position, I use party dummies to identify the location of each party on a left-right ideological dimension. The coefficients estimated for the party dummies are expected to correspond to the party's ideological distance to the JCP. Since the party positions are assumed to be independent across bill-groups, but not necessarily within bill-groups, I use the Huber/White estimator of variance to calculate a confidence interval.

The primary goal of this paper is to examine whether the interparty interaction over the course of legislation affects the legislative positions of opposition parties. From the perspective that places emphasis on the consultation between the government and the opposition, political parties are expected to agree more on legislation, as longer it takes to pass the Diet. As mentioned in the preceding section, however, the degree of interparty interaction does not necessarily become greater as time passes in the legislative process. To estimate the likelihood of an opposition party to support a government bill, I need to account for the heteroskedastic distribution of party positions over the legislative process, assuming that the government and the opposition may or may not interact along with an increase in deliberation time.

Moreover, those who place emphasis on the legislative-administrative relationship, view that the institutional design of the Diet allows the majority to take control of parliamentary agendas, and provides the majority with a credible threat to set a limit to the scope of legislation that bureaucrats can initiate. From this perspective, three scenarios are expected:

   (1) No bill, which the majority opposes, is submitted to the Diet.

   (2) Some bills, which the opposition supports, reach the voting stage taking little time.

   (3) Other bills, which the opposition does not support, may take

FIGURE 2
Party Positions over Deliberation Time
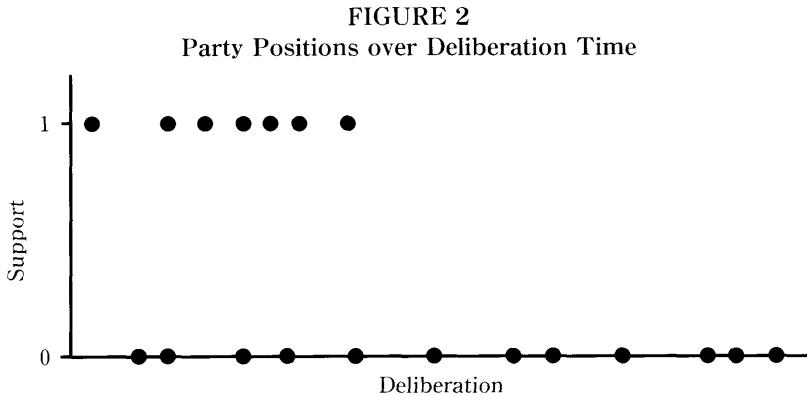
between a matter of days to a matter of months to reach the voting stage.

As shown in Figure 2 that illustrates the last two scenarios (each dot represents the vote cast on a bill: Aye = 1, Nay = 0), whether or not an opposition party supports government legislation is distributed heteroskedastically over the legislative process. In contrast to the accommodation perspective, this agenda control perspective suggests a hypothesis that the party positions converge on the opposing votes as time passes in the legislative process.

To test these hypotheses, my analytical focus is placed on how long it takes for a bill to reach the voting stage. I use the logged number of days between the dates of proposal and voting (LOGTIME), measuring the decreasingly increasing effect of interparty interaction over the course of legislation. To control the factors not specific to individual legislation, I limit the data set to the government bills newly submitted to the Lower House in the budgetary sessions for the period during the LDP government and thereafter.[8]

First, the likelihood of an opposition party to support a government bill is expected to increase as greater the degree of interparty interaction becomes. Such a hypothesis from the view in which the Diet is stylized as a deliberative body is called hereafter "deliberative hypothesis," and can be tested if the estimate for the measure of interparty interaction,

LOGTIME, has a statistically significant positive coefficient. In contrast, interparty interaction has no such effect in the perspective that places emphasis on the majority's ability to take control of legislative agendas. The legislative positions of opposition parties are distributed heteroskedastically over the legislative process, and converge on the opposing votes as time passes in parliamentary deliberation. This "convergence hypothesis" can be tested if the variance of party positions with respect to LOGTIME is heteroskedastic, and the effect of LOGTIME itself is estimated to be statistically significant negative.[9]

For those who place emphasis on the majority's agenda control, the legislative positions of opposition parties are also expected to reflect whether or not the government retains a majority in the Diet. To take into account whether or not the majority takes control of agenda setting in committee, I introduce an explanatory variable, CHAIR, which is defined as a dummy variable equal to 1 if an opposition Diet member presides over the committee to which the bill in question is referred and 0 if otherwise.[10] Similarly, DIVIDED is a measure for operationalizing

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8) Although there are 3,834 such bills, only 3,778 are used to estimate the likelihood of legislative support. As explained later, this is because the variable, which identifies whether or not an opposition Diet member presides over the relevant committee, has a missing value in the case that the chairmanship of the committee changed between the majority and the opposition during the session. Also, two bills without the record of opposing parties are not included in the data set.

9) Let y be the dependent variable, x the set of explanatory variables, and Φ the cumulative distribution function. While a simple probit model can be expressed as $\Pr(y=1)=\Phi(x\beta)$, a heteroskedastic probit model is, $\Pr(y=1)=\Phi(x\beta/e^{z\gamma})$, assuming $\sigma^2=(e^{z\gamma})^2$. Using this model reveals not only whether x increases or decreases the probability of $y = 1$, but also whether z, the set of variables, increases or decreases the dispersion of y. For a political science application, see Alvarez and Brehm (1995).

10) 54 bills with missing CHAIR are excluded from the data set. See footnote 8.

whether or not the majority takes control of both houses.　DIVIDED is equal to 1 if the bill in question is from the Diet session during the LDP government after the 1989 Upper House election and 0 if otherwise.

Following the split in the party, the LDP fell short of winning a majority in the Lower House in the 1993 general election.　To examine whether the coalition governments of the 1990s have any independent impact on the likelihood of legislative support, I introduce three dummy variables corresponding to each of the coalition-specific time periods. First, a dummy variable, COALITION1, is used to identify government legislation from the 1994-1996 period.　During the budgetary session of 1994, the coalition government consisted of the parties ranging from several LDP offshoots to the JSP.　On the other hand, the LDP, an LDP offshoot, and the JSP formed a ruling coalition during the budgetary sessions of 1995 and 1996.

Second, COALITION2 identifies government legislation from the period 1997-1999, during which the LDP regained a majority in the Lower House and shortly after formed a conservative coalition with the Liberal Party (LIB), while remaining as a minority in the Upper House.　It was after the CGP formally joined the ruling coalition that the government retained a majority in both houses.　Thus, COALITION3 is included to identify government legislation from the period of 2000-2001 under the LDP-CGP coalition.　By using these time-specific dummies and their interaction terms with the opposition party dummies, I attempt to examine the legislative consequence of the increased power instability in the 1990s.

4.　Estimating Legislative Support

Table 1 summarizes the estimates of a heteroskedastic probit model of legislative support.　The data set consists of government legislation from the budgetary sessions for the period of 1956-2001.　First, notice that LOGTIME is estimated to have a statistically significant negative coefficient.　At the same time, H(LOGTIME), the heteroskedasticity of party positions with respect to LOGTIME is also estimated to be statisti-

cally significant negative. These estimates together imply that the party positions converge on the opposing votes as time passes in the legislative process.[11] Therefore, the analysis provides preliminary evidence consistent with the convergence hypothesis, and running counter to the deliberative hypothesis that expects an opposition party to become more supportive of government legislation, as longer the bill takes to reach the voting stage.

Second, the estimate for CHAIR is statistically significant positive, implying that it becomes more likely for an opposition party to support government legislation if the chairperson of the committee that the bill in question referred to belongs to an opposition party and thus the majority has less powerful agenda control in committee. This finding is also consistent with the interpretation that the Diet institutions facilitate the majority's agenda control and to structure the legislative-administrative relationship in which bureaucrats internalize the parliamentary preference.[12]

Each party dummy is estimated to have a statistically significant positive coefficient, implying that the opposition parties tend to support government legislation in comparison with the JCP. To be concrete, the estimates are ascending in the order of JSP, CGP, the Social Democratic League (SDL), DSP, and NLC for the period prior to the 1989 Upper House election, which approximately corresponds to their ideological

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11) The likelihood ratio test of heteroskedasticity that tests the full model with or without heteroskedasticity is significant with $\chi^2(1) = 40.76$.

12) The estimate for LOGTIME is in accord with Fukumoto's finding on the relationship between legislative support and committee deliberation. Although Fukumoto regards his finding as evidence supporting the view in which the Diet principally functions as a position-taking device for political parties, it may well be a reflection of the fact that the opposition whose ability to seek legislative gains is severely limited in the Diet has no choice but concentrating on position-taking, given the Diet institutions that grant a ruling majority the prerogative to take control of legislative agendas.

TABLE 1
A Heteroskedastic Probit Model of Legislative Support

	ß	S.E.	P > |Z|
LOGTIME	-0.1293	0.0165	0.0000
CHAIR	0.1398	0.0318	0.0000
JSP	0.2692	0.0401	0.0000
CGP	0.3623	0.0543	0.0000
SDL	0.4053	0.0666	0.0000
DSP	0.4430	0.0640	0.0000
NLC	0.5793	0.0880	0.0000
DIVIDED	0.0180	0.0346	0.6030
JSP_DIVIDED	0.4951	0.0949	0.0000
DSP_DIVIDED	0.5318	0.1216	0.0000
CGP_DIVIDED	0.8117	0.1922	0.0000
COALITION1	0.1629	0.0456	0.0000
LDP	0.5282	0.1371	0.0000
NFP	0.5745	0.1304	0.0000
COALITION2	-0.0165	0.0324	0.6110
NFP_COALITION2	-0.0441	0.1258	0.7260
CGP_COALITION2	0.4060	0.0926	0.0000
DEM	0.4065	0.0706	0.0000
JSP_COALITION2	0.4269	0.0861	0.0000
LIB	0.5522	0.1049	0.0000
SUN	0.8186	0.1718	0.0000
COALITION3	0.0952	0.0401	0.0180
JSP_COALITION3	0.0009	0.0428	0.9830
DEM_COALITION3	-0.0160	0.0632	0.8000
LIB_COALITION3	-0.1670	0.0967	0.0840
Constant	0.4586	0.0610	0.0000
H(LOGTIME) Likelihood Ratio χ^2 (1)	-0.2352	0.0368 40.7600	0.0000
Log-Likelihood Wald χ^2 (25)		-6855.9090 73.6000	

Note: The party positions are based on the Lower House plenary votes on government legislation. The bills included in the data set are those newly submitted to the Lower House in the budgetary sessions for the period 1956-2001 (3,778 bills; 13,748 party votes). The dependent variable is SUPPORT that is a dummy equal to 1 if an opposition party supports a bill and 0 if otherwise. The overall average of the dependent variable is 0.7349. For each explanatory variable, entries give the estimated coefficient, the Huber/White estimator of variance, and the p-value. H(LOGTIME) is the estimate for the heteroskedasticity of party positions with respect to LOGTIME.

location on a left-right dimension.[13]

To understand the legislative consequence of the increased power instability, the variables interacting DIVIDED with the party dummies (JSP, CGP, and DSP) are included in the model. Each of the estimates for the interaction terms, JSP_DIVIDED, CGP_DIVIDED, and DSP_DIVIDED, is statistically significant positive, implying that the three opposition parties became more supportive of government legislation during the "divided" period of the early 1990s.

Table 2 calculates the probability of an opposition party to support a government bill at the average values of LOGTIME and CHAIR.[14] The effect of party ideology is clear and the major opposition parties, except the JCP, became supportive of almost all government legislation, once after the LDP failed to maintain a majority in the Upper House. Even the JSP on average voted against government legislation only 3.5 percent of times.

While the estimate for DIVIDED is not statistically significant, COALITION1 is estimated to have a statistically significant positive coefficient (Table 1). This implies that the LDP's loss of the Upper House control had no substantial impact on the JCP's legislative support, although the transition to the era of coalitions altered the nature of government legislation as to increase even the JCP's agreement rate by 15 percent on average (Table 2). Besides the JCP, the major opposition

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13) See Laver and Hunt (1992) and Kato and Laver (1998) for the ideological location of political parties.

14) Let $\overline{LT}$ and $\overline{OC}$ be the average of LOGTIME (3.6695) and that of CHAIR (0.1218) respectively. The baseline probability of the JCP to support a government bill is calculated as $\Pr(\text{Support} \,|\, \text{JCP}) = \Phi[(\beta_0 + \beta_1\overline{LT} + \beta_2\overline{OC})/e^{\gamma\overline{LT}}]$, where $\beta_0 \sim \beta_2$ are respectively the estimated coefficients for constant, LOGTIME, and CHAIR (γ is the estimated heteroskedasticity of party positions with respect to LOGTIME). For instance, the baseline probability of the JSP to support a government bill is calculated as $\Pr(\text{Support} \,|\, \text{JSP}) = \Phi[(\beta_0 + \beta_1\overline{LT} + \beta_2\overline{OC} + \beta_3)/e^{\gamma\overline{LT}}]$, where β_3 is the estimated coefficient for JSP.

TABLE 2
Probability of Party Support on Government Legislation

Party	Baseline Probability	Divided (1990-93)	Coalition1 (1994-96)	Coalition2 (1997-99)	Coalition3 (2000-01)
JCP	50.1	50.1	65.1	50.1	59.0
JSP	73.9	96.5	—	95.1	80.7
CGP	80.6	99.7	—	96.6	—
SDL	83.2	—	—	—	—
DEM	83.3	—	—	83.3	88.3
DSP	85.4	99.0	—	—	—
LDP	89.5	—	95.0	—	—
LIB	90.5	—	—	90.5	93.8
NFP	91.4	—	96.0	91.4	—
NLC	91.6	—	—	—	—
SUN	97.4	—	—	97.4	—

Note: Based on the statistically significant estimates in Table 1, the probability of an opposition party to support a government bill is calculated at the average values of LOGTIME (3.6695) and CHAIR (0.1218). Opposition parties are listed in ascending order of the estimated baseline probability of legislative support.

parties under the coalition governments of the mid-1990s were the LDP and the New Frontier Party (NFP). The LDP was in opposition only in the first of the three budgetary sessions under the coalition governments, and so was the NFP under the tri-party grand coalition. Although it is impossible to examine the change in the probabilities of these two parties supporting government legislation, one can reasonably argue that, as shown in Table 2, the 30 percent difference that exists in the probability between the LDP and the JCP to support government legislation corresponds to the ideological distance lying between the two parties. Moreover, the NFP's support probability is slightly higher than that of the LDP, reflecting its status of an "interior" opposition party that lies ideologically inside the grand coalition.[15]

The estimates also suggest that a party once in office tends to continue supporting government legislation. While the estimate for COALITION2 is not statistically significant, that for JSP_COALITION2

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15) See Cox, Masuyama, and McCubbins (2000).

is estimated to have a statistically significant positive coefficient. This implies that although the JCP's probability of legislative agreement returns to the baseline level of 50 percent, the JSP on average supports government legislation 95 percent of times, as shown in Table 2.[16] In the second coalition period, however, the opposition parties ranging from the LDP offshoots to the JSP factions merged into the Democrats (DEM). As symbolized by the relatively lower level of the DEM's probability of legislative support (83.3%), the reunion of opposition parties ideologically distant from the LDP was realized by eliminating the old generation leaders who took a prominent position in the coalition governments of the mid-1990s.

At the same time, the conservative camp also underwent party realignment, leading to the political environment in which the CGP inclines toward a pro-government stance and eventually forms a coalition with the LDP. To be concrete, the NFP separated into the Sun Party (SUN), the LIB, and the CGP. As shown in Table 2, the CGP's probability of legislative support (96.6%) is higher than that of the NFP, implying that the CGP already began assuming a pivotal position in legislative coalition building, given that the conservative coalition alone did not retain a majority in the Upper House.[17]

For the third coalition period, only the estimate for COALITION3 is statistically significant. As shown in Table 2, the probability of legislative support slightly increases from that of the previous period for all opposition parties except the JSP. The LIB's probability of legislative support is roughly 94 percent on average, which is higher than its support probability before forming the conservative coalition with the LDP. This is in accord with the tendency of the party to support government

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16) The JSP remained informally allied with the LDP until May 1998, and only voted against twice before the LDP formed a coalition with the LIB during the second coalition period.

17) The CGP supported all government legislation under the LDP-LIB coalition.

legislation even after its secession from the ruling coalition.   On the other hand, the JSP became somewhat significantly less supportive of government legislation, reflecting the generational change that has taken place within the party since the collapse of the LDP-JSP grand coalition.

5.   The Diffusion of Power

In this paper I have conducted a statistical analysis of the party positions on government legislation in the postwar Diet.   Contrary to the common argument, the interparty interaction over the course of legislation does not increase the likelihood of an opposition party to support a government bill.   It is merely a matter of the distribution of party positions over the legislative process.   Some bills that opposition parties agree on reach the voting stage taking little time, while others that parties disagree over take between a matter of days to a matter of months to be voted on.   The party positions are distributed heteroskedastically over the legislative process, and converge on the opposing votes as time passes in parliamentary deliberation.   The analysis also finds that it becomes more likely for an opposition party to support government legislation if the relevant committee chair belongs to an opposition party and thus the government has limited agenda control in committee deliberation.

The picture that emerges from the analysis is in strong contrast with the traditional image of the Japanese Diet.   The Diet operates in a markedly consensual mode not because of the institutional attributes that Mochizuki and Krauss emphasize, but the Diet appears to be consensual despite the availability of parliamentary rules that the majority could use to get its way.[18)]   It is thus critically important to recognize that the strategic interaction between the government and the opposition may behaviorally result in the tendency to seek unanimous decisions, even though the parliamentary structure ensures majority control of legislative

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18)   See Masuyama (2000c, 2003) that compares the Diet with Western European parliaments, and shows that the Diet ranks relatively high in terms of the majority's ability to control legislative agendas.

agendas.

To explain why the Diet tends to seek unanimity, some may have recourse to the cultural tradition in Japan and the elite socialization of cooperative culture *à la* consensual democracies.[19]   In contrast, this paper demonstrates an alternative approach to the legislative structure to distinguish institutional necessity from overt behavioral patterns that may emerge from the strategic efforts of parliamentary actors in an attempt to cope with institutional and non-institutional environments.[20] The findings in this paper are consistent with the expectations from the perspective that places emphasis on the Diet institutions to allow the majority to take control of parliamentary agendas, and to structure the legislative-administrative relationship in which bureaucrats internalize the parliamentary preference.[21]

The legislative positions of opposition parties are in principle structured along with a left-right ideological dimension.   However, the parties, with the exception of the JCP, became fully supportive of government legislation once after the LDP failed to maintain a majority in the Upper House.   These positional changes in the early 1990s imply that when the government cannot fully take control of the Diet, the parties of centrists and social democrats may assume a pivotal position in legislative coalition building.   On the other hand, as in the case of the NFP, an opposition party may have no reason to object government legislation when the ruling coalition consists of ideologically diverse parties and the

19)   Richardson and Flanagan (1984) and Lijphart (1977). As Kohno (1997) shows, however, we must keep in mind that such cultural arguments have not generally withstood scrutiny.

20)   See Kawato (2002, 2005) that examines the voting records in the Diet committee on procedural matters. The selection of majority-restricting institutions has been of major interest to legislative scholars.   See Shepsle and Weingast (1995).

21)   See Cox and McCubbins (1993, 2002, 2005).   For an analysis of the effects of the institutional time constraint in the Diet, see Masuyama (2000a, 2000b, and 2003).

opposition party in question lies within the ideological range of the ruling parties.

The findings also call our attention to the problem of the traditional approach to focus on an observable event such as the transition of power. To distinguish the politics of the 1990s, the traditional approach tends to highlight the demise of the LDP dominance, the transition to the era of coalitions, and the policy making organizations and patterns seemingly characteristic of the coalition governments.[22]   Nevertheless, as the analysis in this paper implies, the trend toward consensual decision making was established well ahead of the demise of the LDP government in 1993.

As a consequence of the increased power instability in the 1990s, the parties of centrists and social democrats played the pivotal role in coalition building, shifting the range of government legislation in their favor. Table 3 compares the number of government legislation that the three middle-of-the-road parties voted against between the periods of the late 1980s and the early 1990s by the Diet committees.   As shown in the last three columns, the policy areas that the moderate parties mostly changed their positions toward government legislation fall under the jurisdiction of the Finance and Local Administration Committees.   In particular, these parties used to vote against the government legislation concerning finance and tax policies prior to the 1990s.   This implies that the preferences of centrists and social democrats significantly affected the way in which the government formulated the finance and tax policies in the early 1990s.[23]

Given the institutional design of the Diet to facilitate the majority's agenda control, government legislation that opposition parties disagree with may take between a matter of days to a matter of months to reach the voting stage, while those without opposition take little time to pass the Diet.   The legislative function that the Diet is expected to perform is

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22)   For instance, see Nakano (1996) and Kusano (1999).   Cf. Nonaka (1998) and Ito (1999).

23)   See Masuyama (2003, Ch. 9) for details.

TABLE 3
The Number of Legislation without Government-Opposition Agreement

	A: 1985-1989			B: 1990-1993			A-B		
	JSP	CGP	DSP	JSP	CGP	DSP	JSP	CGP	DSP
Finance	19	17	16	1	0	2	18	17	14
Local Administration	15	13	13	1	1	1	14	12	12
Cabinet	12	7	4	1	0	0	11	7	4
Welfare and Labor	6	5	3	0	0	0	6	5	3
Agriculture*	6	4	3	0	0	0	6	4	3
Education	7	1	0	2	0	0	5	1	0
Construction	5	2	2	1	0	0	4	2	2
Judicial Affairs	5	4	3	2	0	0	3	4	3
Transportation	3	1	1	0	0	0	3	1	1
Science and Technology	3	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0
Environment	2	1	0	0	0	0	2	1	0
Communications	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1
Foreign Affairs	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Commerce and Industry	3	1	0	3	0	0	0	1	0
Special**	15	6	6	2	0	0	13	6	6

Note: Entries give the number of government legislation the three oppostion parties (JSP, CGP, and DSP) voted against at the Lower House plenary during the budgetary sessions for the period of 1985-1993 (the 103rd-the 126th sessions) by the Diet committees. The period is divided into two (A: 1985-1989, B: 1990-1993), and the committees are listed in descending order of the difference between the two periods (A-B).
* Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries
** A total number of government legislation that any of the three parties voted against in special committees.

to create a parliamentary majority that secures control of the legislative agenda, and to structure the legislative-administrative relationship in which bureaucrats internalize what the ruling majority wants. The Diet institutions need to be examined from the perspective of the relationship between not only the government and the opposition, but also politicians and bureaucrats.

To understand the political dynamics of the 1990s, we must pay attention to the shift in the political landscape taken place in the early 1990s, which evolved into the factor lying behind the demise of the LDP government and the formation of coalition governments in the ensuing period. Since the 1990s, negotiations between political parties became an essential element of the lawmaking process, and the parties of centrists

and social democrats came to assume a pivotal position in coalition building.

At the same time, however, the legislative gain for the opposition came with a heavy electoral cost. That is, the condition for the opposition to appeal to the public as an alternative to the government further deteriorated. The LDP continued to decline in power, only to increase the number of unaffiliated voters. The diffusion of parliamentary power since the 1990s has significantly eroded the ability of citizens to know who is responsible for lawmaking and to use elections as instruments of government accountability.

Although an examination of the relationship between the trends of legislation and broader party politics is beyond the scope of this paper, I believe that the analysis in this paper represents a step in the right direction. Further examinations of the legislative process to take into account the institutional design of the Diet would contribute to a better understanding of legislative politics in Japan and elsewhere.

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