

1 The Rise and Fall of the Democratic Party of Japan

Kenji E. Kushida and Phillip Y. Lipsky

The Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) came to power in 2009 in a landslide electoral victory, ending the Liberal Democratic Party's (LDP's) nearly continuous rule of over half a century. This was widely heralded as Japan's most significant political transformation since the LDP's formation and assumption of power in 1955.¹ For the first time in over fifty years, the LDP was no longer the largest party in the House of Representatives (lower house) of the Japanese Diet. The DPJ came to power with a strong hand; in combination with its coalition partners, it already controlled the House of Councillors (upper house), and the party now commanded 64 percent of lower-house seats. However, in 2012, just over three years later, the DPJ fell from power in an equally stunning landslide loss to the LDP.

The DPJ ran on a platform of change, promising a decisive break from LDP rule and a wide range of political and policy reforms. However, the DPJ was unable or unwilling to carry out most of its reform promises. Furthermore, DPJ rule was characterized by unstable leadership—three prime ministers in just over three years in power. Public enthusiasm for the

1 For examples, see Iinuma (2009); Arase (2010); Green (2010); Reed, Scheiner, and Thies (2012); and Reed, Scheiner, and Thies (2009). An extensive list of media quotes can be found in Rosenbluth and Thies (2010, 186).

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DPJ quickly faded and turned to disillusionment. Although approval ratings for the DPJ recovered briefly with each new prime minister, public support eroded rapidly, culminating in a crushing electoral defeat that left many wondering whether the party would survive.

The brief reign of the DPJ raises two core puzzles. The first is the party's remarkable ascendance and equally dramatic fall from power. The DPJ's coming to power necessitates a reassessment of many of the central questions of Japanese party politics. Japan was long described as an "uncommon democracy" (Pempel 1990), a political system characterized by LDP dominance and fragmented, weak opposition parties (Scheiner 2006). The DPJ's landslide victory of 2009 clearly signaled that it was no longer appropriate to characterize Japanese politics in these terms. However, the DPJ's assumption of power raises equally compelling questions: Why are electoral outcomes in Japan now so volatile? Has Japan become a true two-party system? What factors enabled the DPJ to grow so quickly from a small party to a governing party with an overwhelming majority in the Diet? And, why did the party fall from grace so decisively in just a few years?

The second core puzzle concerns policymaking under the DPJ government. The DPJ came to power in 2009 with an ambitious reform agenda, promising fundamental transformations across the spectrum—among other areas, social policy, education, fiscal policy, transportation policy, foreign policy, relations between central and local governments, and the relationship between politicians and bureaucrats. However, the DPJ achieved remarkably little while in power. Most of the party's policy platform was scaled back or abandoned. Legislative activity under the DPJ government stagnated, falling to levels comparable to or below the waning years of LDP rule. This is doubly puzzling, because when it assumed power in 2009, the DPJ controlled both houses of the Diet in combination with minor coalition partners. Traditional explanations for constraints on policy change, such as divided government (Kelly 1993; Quirk and Nesmith 1995; Cameron et al. 1997; Edwards, Barrett, and Peake 1997; Binder 1999) and veto players (Tsebelis 1995, 2011, 1999) do not appear to offer compelling explanations for policy stasis under the DPJ. Why was the DPJ unable to deliver on the promises that brought it to power?

This volume represents one of the first comprehensive examinations of the DPJ's rise as a political party and its policies in power. The chapters make important contributions to the study of Japanese politics but also draw on and advance academic work on a wider range of issues of interest to political scientists. Foremost among these is the role of electoral institutions and their impact on political organization and policymaking (Duverger 1954;

Downs 1957; Rae 1971; Lijphart 1994; Cox 1997; Bawn and Thies 2003). We show that some aspects of Japanese politics have evolved as predicted by this literature—in particular, increasing convergence toward two-party politics, greater electoral volatility, and broader policy appeals designed to attract the median voter. However, we also observe important anomalies, particularly the continuing influence of rural regions and the absence of policy differentiation between the two major parties. Beyond electoral issues, individual chapters also address salient issues with broad relevance, such as the politics of redistribution, fiscal decentralization, environmental politics, gender and politics, and the politics of disaster response.

In this chapter, we begin by providing an overview of the DPJ as a political party, tracing its history from its founding through its ascent to power. Then, through references to the chapters in this volume, we discuss the political conditions and changes that contributed to the DPJ's rise. Primary among them is the 1994 reform of Japan's electoral institutions. The new electoral system generates strong incentives for political consolidation in the direction of a two-party system, and it has nationalized elections, reducing the importance of local factors and increasing the volatility of outcomes. This made it possible for the DPJ to ascend rapidly as a credible alternative to the LDP and to take over power in the decisive election of 2009. In addition, the DPJ benefited from effective organization and strategy, particularly in the recruitment of credible candidates and the targeting of rural regions, which still remain influential in Japanese politics. The media also portrayed the DPJ in a favorable light despite the fact that it was a newcomer to the political scene. Finally, there was an element of chance: The 2009 election came on the heels of the 2008 global financial crisis, which plunged Japan into its worst economic recession since the end of World War II.

We then consider governance under the DPJ. We provide an overview of the reforms proposed by the DPJ in its campaign manifesto of 2009, and then examine the extent to which these reforms were realized. For the most part, the DPJ failed to implement its reform agenda. Time-series data indicate that the DPJ government was characterized by anomalously low levels of legislative activity compared to previous LDP-led governments; not only did the DPJ implement few of its promised reforms, but it implemented very little of anything. We describe how the contributions to this volume shed light on this puzzling lack of action—what accounts for political change without policy change under the DPJ?

The chapters in this volume point to six crucial factors. First, electoral incentives, which facilitated the DPJ's rapid rise, also ironically constrained its ability to implement ambitious reforms once it was in power. As local

interpersonal networks became less critical to winning elections, electoral volatility increased, shortening the time horizons of politicians. Far-reaching reforms, particularly those with short-term pain, became all the more unattractive. Second, the continuing influence of rural regions, particularly in local politics and in the upper house of the Diet, places an important constraint on reform for both major political parties. Third, the DPJ was paralyzed by internecine conflict for many of the same reasons that the LDP has fragmented in recent years. Fourth, the DPJ's promises to reduce the power of the bureaucracy ironically deprived it of administrative capacity, reducing its ability to formulate and execute policy. Fifth, economic constraints, particularly Japan's large and growing public debt, constrained the scope for several of the DPJ's signature programs, such as the child allowance and elimination of highway tolls. This was further compounded by the March 11, 2011, Great East Japan Earthquake, tsunami, and Fukushima nuclear disaster, which necessitated additional fiscal outlays for emergency response and reconstruction. Sixth, in foreign policy, international structural constraints—particularly regional threats and Japan's continuing reliance on the United States for security—forced the DPJ to quickly abandon its plans to differentiate itself from the LDP.

The struggles of the DPJ government illustrate several important features of Japanese politics today. There are common structural constraints facing any Japanese party in power, including the dire state of public finances, demographic challenges of an aging and shrinking population, and geopolitical realities. One of the contributions of this volume is to illustrate how electoral incentives have also impeded major reforms.

However, these structural constraints do not necessarily doom prospects for future parties, or for reform. The DPJ clearly suffered from several party-specific problems that made it difficult to govern effectively. The party's awkward power structure and upheavals in party leadership surely owe something to the personalities of key politicians, particularly Ozawa Ichiro. Moreover, there were also important, avoidable blunders, such as Hatoyama's declaration, made without consultation with the United States, that the Futenma base would be "at minimum" relocated out of Okinawa, and Kan's mishandling of the consumption tax issue before the 2010 upper-house elections. The DPJ also overpromised in its 2009 campaign manifesto, for example by proposing large increases in government outlays and reductions in taxes and fees that were unrealistic given the state of Japan's public finances. Furthermore, the DPJ's policy to undercut the bureaucracy was ultimately reversed, but only after depriving the party of administrative capacity during its early days in power. The DPJ's record of governance therefore provides important lessons for future governing parties.

In 2010, and to a far greater extent in 2012, many of the same factors that aided the DPJ's rise contributed to its dramatic fall from power. In both elections, the LDP reversed the DPJ's gains in still-influential rural regions. In the 2010 upper-house election, this was enough to swing the result in the LDP's favor thanks to malapportionment—the LDP won seven more seats than the DPJ despite receiving seven million fewer votes. In 2012, floating voters abandoned the DPJ in droves, abstaining or gravitating toward other parties. Low turnout amplified the LDP's advantage among reliable, rural voters. The volatile electoral system delivered another extreme outcome, lifting the LDP from 118 to 294 seats and diminishing the DPJ from 230 to 57. The DPJ lost public support and fell from power in much the same way the LDP had only three years earlier—a ruling party beset with infighting, widely perceived as out of touch with the general public, and unable to implement meaningful reform.

The DPJ: Origins and Ascent to Power

What are the origins of the DPJ, and how did it develop as a credible political party, capable of assuming a majority of the lower house in 2009? For most of Japan's postwar history, the political system was dominated by the LDP, with a weak or fragmented opposition. During the Cold War, the primary opposition party was the Socialist Party of Japan (SPJ), which relied heavily on organized labor and focused on ideological issues such as opposition to the Self-Defense Forces and the U.S.-Japan security alliance. The LDP's primary support base was large business, small business, and agriculture, sometimes characterized as "Corporatism without Labor" (Pempel and Tsunekawa 1979). Other small opposition parties were fragmented or marginal, although the *Kōmeitō*, which could rely on intense support from a religious organization, the *Sōka Gakkai*, later became an important coalition partner of the LDP.

The LDP utilized the advantages of incumbency to shape the political system and sustain its grip on power (Pempel 1990). Japan's multimember district, single nontransferable vote (MMD-SNTV) electoral system encouraged intraparty competition within the LDP and disadvantaged opposition parties that lacked dense, local ties and access to central government funds.² Malapportionment further magnified the influence of rural voters, who overwhelmingly supported the LDP. The LDP funneled public works funds into local areas, with personalistic patronage (pork-barrel) ties to localities; parties that were not in power, with no realistic chances to gain power, were unable to

2 For overviews, see Rosenbluth and Thies (2010); Pempel (1998); and Kabashima and Steel (2011).

offer these resources to local voters and small and medium-sized businesses, further entrenching the LDP's incumbent position (Scheiner 2006).

In 1993, for the first time since 1955, the LDP lost its lower-house majority when Ozawa Ichiro bolted from the party along with a large group of defectors. A coalition of nine parties formed a government, putting the LDP out of power. The coalition broke apart in a year, however, and the LDP returned to power in 1994 by forming an unlikely coalition with its historical opposition party, the SPJ, and the small New Party Sakigake. This ushered in a second period of LDP rule, albeit through reliance on various coalition partners. The SPJ shifted many of its long-held policy positions in order to govern alongside the LDP. It abandoned core principles, such as opposition to the U.S.-Japan security alliance, leading many members to desert the party. The party, renamed the Japan Socialist Party (JSP), was decimated in the 1996 lower-house election and became increasingly irrelevant.

The DPJ itself was founded in 1996 through a merger of several parties, including former members of the Socialist Party and defectors from the incumbent LDP. Hatoyama Yukio, a fourth-generation LDP politician, and Kan Naoto, from the Democratic Social Federation, were the two founders. They had been part of the New Party Sakigake, consisting mostly of reform-minded LDP politicians who had left the party and had joined the non-LDP government in 1993–94. In the 1996 lower-house election, the DPJ's success was limited, and it won only 52 seats—the same number it held before (Smith, Pekkanen, and Krauss chapter in this volume).

In 1998, the DPJ absorbed six small opposition parties, transforming itself into a “new” DPJ. The New Frontier Party (Shinshinto, NFP), the primary opposition party after the 1996 election, had splintered apart, precipitating a major realignment of opposition party members. The “new” DPJ emerged as the primary beneficiary. As shown in figure 1.1, beginning from the 2000 lower-house election, the DPJ quickly established itself as the dominant opposition party. In 2003, the Liberal Party merged with the DPJ, further consolidating the DPJ's position as the primary opposition party. The Liberal Party was led by Ozawa Ichiro, a former LDP strongman. Ozawa joined the ranks of Hatoyama and Kan as a leader of the new DPJ. Until the 1990s, Japan's political opposition was defined by the JSP and its ideological defiance to LDP rule. In contrast, by the 2000 election, there were fewer former socialists among DPJ ranks than candidates who were former LDP or Sakigake politicians.

The 2005 election marked a major setback for the DPJ. The LDP's Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro ran a highly successful campaign by framing his postal privatization plan as a litmus test for reform. By ejecting many

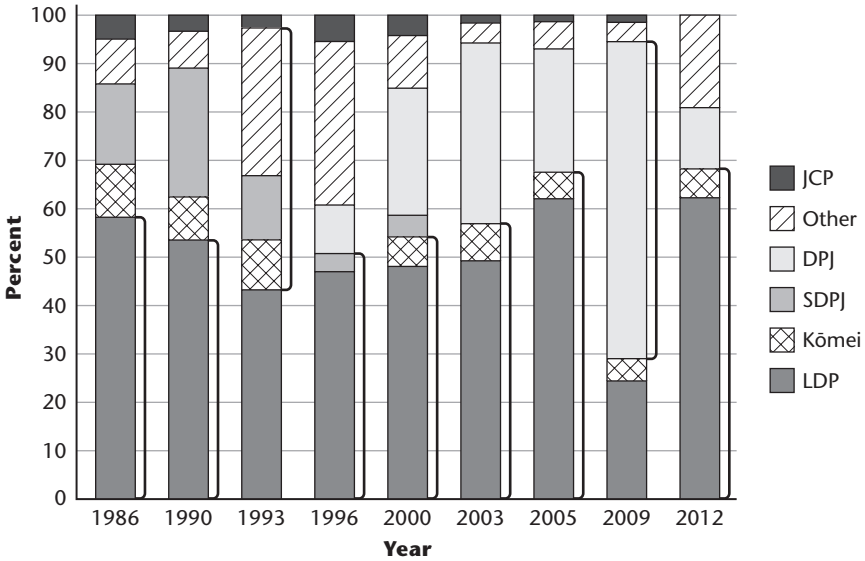


FIGURE 1.1 Japan's House of Representatives (Lower-House) Strength, 1986–2012

Source: National Diet.

Note: Brackets indicate majority party or coalition after election.

of his detractors from his own party, Koizumi was able to focus the election on an internecine struggle within the LDP. DPJ members were split over the postal reforms, further sidelining the party during the election. After Koizumi stepped down in 2006 of his own accord, however, the LDP could not maintain its popularity. The party cycled through three prime ministers in as many years. The LDP seemed to retrench from its reform agenda. Abe Shinzo, Koizumi's successor, allowed recently expelled postal rebels back into the party in 2006. LDP leaders increasingly criticized Koizumi's reforms as going too far in the direction of American-style, cutthroat capitalism.

In elections for the less powerful House of Councillors (upper house), in which half of the 242 seats are elected every three years, the DPJ's growth began in 1998, as seen in figure 1.2. It grew steadily in each election, and in 2007 the DPJ became the largest party in the upper house as Abe's government rapidly lost the public support that Koizumi had so effectively harnessed. This created a so-called twisted Diet, in which the lower house was controlled by the LDP and the upper house by opposition parties. The LDP retained a two-thirds majority in the lower house, which technically allowed the party to overturn upper-house decisions. However, this was considered an extraordinary option and was exercised in moderation.

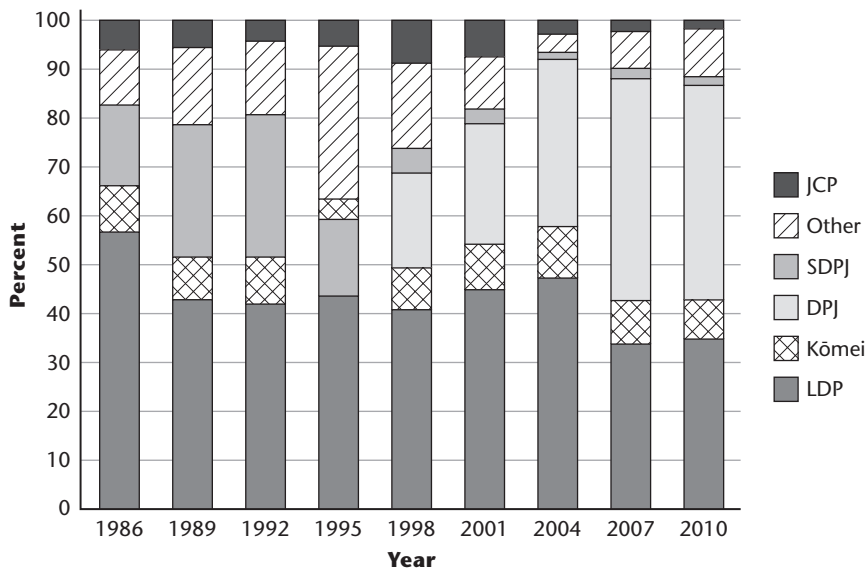


FIGURE I.2 Japan's House of Councillors (Upper-House) Strength, 1986–2010
Source: National Diet.

In the 2009 lower-house election, as we described earlier, the DPJ won in a landslide, the first lower-house election that the LDP had lost outright since the party's formation in 1955.

Explaining the DPJ's Rise and Fall

How did the DPJ ascend so rapidly to power? Why did it fall so dramatically only three years later?³ The chapters in this volume emphasize changes in electoral institutions, the continuing influence of local politics in rural regions, the DPJ's success in recruiting new candidates, and media coverage.

Several authors in this volume argue that electoral institutions were a crucial factor that facilitated the DPJ's rise to power. In 1994, Japan's electoral system underwent the most significant change in postwar history. The multimember district, single nontransferable vote system for lower-house elections was replaced with a combination of single-member districts (SMD, 300 seats) and proportional representation (PR, 200 seats in 1996, reduced to 180 from 2000). These changes profoundly altered the incentive structures confronted by politicians and voters.

³ The DPJ's fall from power is analyzed in greater detail in a forthcoming volume that focuses on the 2012 election (Pekkanen, Reed, and Scheiner 2013).

The electoral reforms of the 1990s weakened one-party rule by mitigating incumbency advantage and the malapportionment of districts that had long tilted electoral outcomes in favor of the LDP. In his contribution to the volume, McElwain shows that reelection of candidates has been increasingly determined by partisan swings rather than by past performance or the strength of local networks. This has contributed to greater electoral volatility; even powerful, well-established politicians are now routinely expelled from office in Japanese national elections. This new electoral reality has made it more feasible for opposition parties like the DPJ to assume power in a “wave election” that tilts districts uniformly in favor of one party. On the flip side, volatility implies that the pendulum can swing back equally decisively, as the 2012 electoral defeat of the DPJ illustrates. Scheiner similarly argues that electoral incentives have promoted a two-party system in Japan, much as the theoretical literature on electoral politics predicts. This means that SMD seats are increasingly contested by only two competitive candidates.⁴

Despite the general trend toward consolidation under a two-party system, some third parties, such as the Kōmeitō, have survived and exercised important influence over Japanese politics in recent years. The DPJ government in 2009 was also formed as a coalition with two minor parties, the People’s New Party and the Social Democratic Party, primarily in order to maintain a majority in the upper house. What allows some third parties to retain influence in the Japanese political system? Reed finds that the key factor for third-party survival is party organization rooted within civil society and the capacity to elect significant numbers of candidates to local assemblies. Failed third parties had little organization of their own and depended upon candidates’ own local support networks (*kōenkai*), a less effective organizational structure under the new electoral system.

Despite lower-house electoral changes that have shifted the focus of politicians toward urban voters, local politics and rural regions retain outsized influence over Japanese politics. One reason for this is malapportionment in the upper house, in which rural regions still receive disproportionate representation. Shimizu highlights another reason in her contribution to this volume: the increasing independence of local politicians. The LDP’s dominance was long buttressed by a strong support base in rural areas led by local politicians who worked on behalf of national LDP candidates. In recent years, municipal mergers drastically weakened the LDP’s support base by reducing the number of local politicians and redrawing electoral

4 This trend was partially reversed in 2012, and it remains to be seen whether the pattern will hold in future elections.

district boundaries. Shimizu finds, however, that the DPJ was not able to take full advantage of the new institutional arrangements, with local politicians becoming more independent of both major parties. While Ozawa was able to capture many rural votes with promises of subsidies in 2007 and 2009, these votes were not as loyal as they once were to the LDP, and they reverted to the LDP during subsequent elections. This has contributed to a broader phenomenon: an increase in “floating voters,” who have no allegiance to any major party. Although rural regions still tilt in the direction of the LDP, neither of Japan’s major parties can now take for granted a reliable, local support base. To succeed, parties must pay attention to the changing needs of increasingly independent—and very often still rural—localities. Hasunuma similarly points to the DPJ’s promise of rural decentralization as a factor that enabled the DPJ to gain seats after rural voters felt abandoned by the LDP, particularly following reforms enacted under Prime Minister Koizumi that decreased funding flows from the national to local governments.

A key factor in the DPJ’s rise was its success in candidate recruitment—the ability to field credible candidates across a large number of electoral districts. This challenge, which is often a difficult one for opposition parties, is examined by Smith, Pekkanen, and Krauss. They find that the *kōbo* (literally translated as “public recruitment”) system of candidate recruitment effectively grew the DPJ’s candidate pool by adding credible candidates where the local party organization was otherwise weak. Remarkably, candidates recruited through *kōbo* performed no worse than other, more well-established DPJ candidates. This enabled the DPJ to rapidly field candidates against the LDP across the nation. Reed also points out that the DPJ’s merger with Ozawa’s Liberal Party before the 2003 election strengthened the party by allowing it to field more credible candidates nationwide. For example, before the merger, the DPJ was virtually irrelevant in Ozawa’s stronghold in Iwate Prefecture.

Finally, the DPJ’s electoral fortunes were buttressed by favorable media coverage. Maeda analyzes an intriguing advantage that the DPJ has enjoyed: the rise of public support for the party even while it was in opposition. Maeda notes that in democracies around the world, increased media coverage tends to increase public support for parties. Opposition parties usually fail to gain significant media attention, leading to difficulties in gaining public support. The DPJ, however, enjoyed increasing news coverage from 2003 on, as it gained recognition as a serious contender in an emerging two-party system against the LDP, and then again after the 2007 upper-house election, when it won a majority of

upper-house seats. Maeda argues that this unusual level of media coverage for an opposition party increased the DPJ's support in opinion polls and helped propel the party to power.

The DPJ in Power

Following its rapid ascent and landslide victory, the DPJ government quickly fell out of favor with the public. Figure 1.3 shows cabinet approval and disapproval ratings from 1998 until 2012. The shaded areas indicate periods when disapproval rates exceeded approval rates. The LDP's Mori government was highly unpopular, with record-low approval rates and a surging disapproval rate. This situation was reversed almost completely under Koizumi, who consistently saw net-positive approval ratings during his five years in office. Koizumi's successors, however, followed a predictable pattern of initially high approval ratings followed by a rapid decline and exit from office within about a year. Figure 1.3 shows that this pattern—high initial approval followed by rapid decline—largely continued under successive DPJ governments.

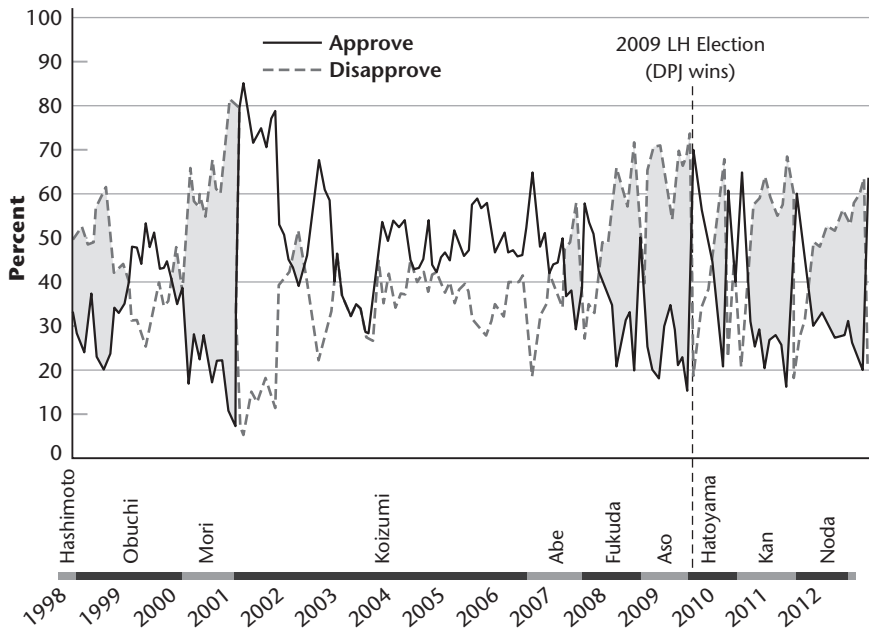


FIGURE 1.3 Cabinet Approval/Disapproval Ratings, 1998–2012

Source: NHK (<http://www.nhk.or.jp/bunken/yonon/political/index.html>).

After the DPJ came to power, Prime Minister Hatoyama Yukio's term began with high approval ratings, reflecting the public's high hopes for the DPJ administration. By early spring 2010, internal political strife, mishandling of the Futenma U.S. military base relocation issue,⁵ and DPJ party president Ozawa Ichiro's campaign financing scandals contributed to lower approval ratings. Kan Naoto and Noda Yoshihiko came to office with successively lower initial approval ratings, a pattern mirroring the approval ratings of Abe, Fukuda, and Aso. Public disapproval dominated the tenure of the Kan and Noda cabinets. The Japanese public had become quickly disillusioned with DPJ government.

Figure 1.4 depicts party identification from 1998 to 2012, focusing on the LDP and DPJ. In the initial years since its founding, only a very small share of the Japanese population supported the DPJ, with support generally hovering in the single digits. Support increased to the 10-15 percent range during the Koizumi years, as the DPJ established itself as the main opposition party. Support continued to increase during the governments of Koizumi's successors, with a spike in 2007 when the DPJ became the largest party in the upper house. Public support for the DPJ decisively overtook that of the LDP only in 2009, which coincided with the party's landslide victory in the lower-house elections. However, support for the DPJ dropped below that of the LDP during the Kan government and continued to fall under Noda. The LDP's approval rating shot up dramatically in late 2012 after its landslide victory in the lower house, while support for the DPJ declined to lows not observed since the early years of the party's founding.

5 The location of U.S. military bases in Okinawa, particularly those in the middle of densely populated areas, is a contentious issue in local politics. In 1996, the LDP government reached an agreement with the United States to reduce the U.S. military presence in the more populous regions of southern Okinawa, following an incident in which U.S. servicemen raped a local 14-year-old girl, which sparked widespread local protests. Futenma airbase, located in the middle of Ginowan City, was a focal point of local protests particularly after an incident in which a helicopter crashed into the neighboring area during a U.S. military exercise. In 2006, Washington signed a pact with the LDP to relocate Futenma airbase from Ginowan City to a new offshore location in Henoko Bay of northern Okinawa. The DPJ opposed these arrangements from its inception, and shortly before taking office in 2009, Hatoyama promised to move the airbase "at least" outside of Okinawa Prefecture and signaled a personal desire to relocate the base to Guam. The United States opposed this, and in 2009, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visited Japan to ensure that the original agreement, along with Japanese financial support to relocate a number of troops to Guam, was maintained. Under U.S. pressure and domestic criticism for his handling of the issue, Hatoyama reneged on his promise to move Futenma in May 2010, and formally apologized to the governor of Okinawa. One month later, he resigned from office.

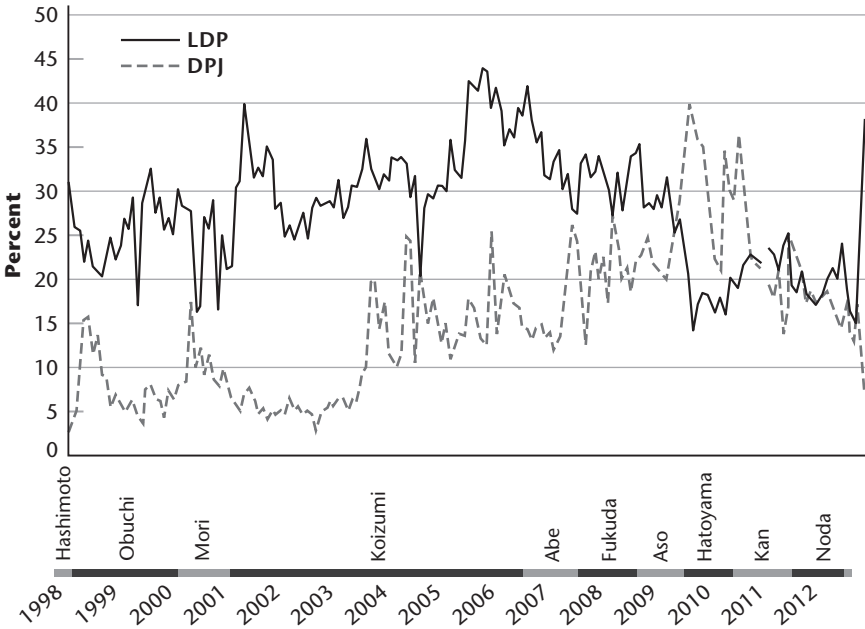


FIGURE 1.4 Party Identification, 1998–2012

Source: NHK (<http://www.nhk.or.jp/bunken/yoron/political/index.html>).

To provide context and reference, table 1.1 shows a timeline of the major events during the DPJ's rule.

Policymaking under the DPJ: Party Change without Policy Change

An important reason for the sharply declining popular support of the DPJ while it was in power was the perceived failure of the DPJ to govern effectively and enact its proposed legislative agenda. How much did the DPJ actually achieve while it was in power? What did the DPJ's policymaking track record look like?

It is useful to begin by placing the DPJ government in historical comparative perspective. To do so, we examine time-series data on the total number of laws submitted and passed under various governments in Japan since 1980. Figure 1.5 shows that legislative activity increased sharply in Japan between the mid-1990s and mid-2000s, a period associated with administrative reforms enacted by the Hashimoto and Koizumi governments. A large body of scholarship has documented how these reforms affected many of Japan's governing institutions (Schaede 2008; Vogel 2006; Kushida and

TABLE 1.1
Timeline of Major Events during DPJ Rule

| PM | Year | Date | Major event |
|----------|--|--------------|--|
| Hatoyama | 2009 | 8/30 | DPJ wins 308 seats in the House of Representatives. |
| | | 9/16 | Hatoyama cabinet is formed. |
| | | 9/22 | Hatoyama pledges to cut greenhouse gas emissions 25 percent by 2020. |
| | | 11/11 | Budget screening begins. |
| | | 12/15 | Hatoyama announces reconsideration of Futenma relocation site. |
| | 2010 | 1/15 | Ozawa Ichiro's secretaries arrested for misreporting funds in Tokyo land deal. |
| | | 3/9 | Report submitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding a confidential agreement reached between Japan and the United States in the 1960s on the introduction of nuclear weapons into Japan. |
| | | 5/4 | Hatoyama reneges on his Futenma relocation promise. |
| | | 5/30 | SDP leaves DPJ-led coalition over Futenma issue. |
| | | 6/2 | Hatoyama resigns. |
| Kan | 2010 | 6/8 | Kan cabinet is formed. |
| | | 7/11 | DPJ loses majority in upper-house elections. |
| | | 9/7 | Chinese fishing trawler collides with Japanese Coast Guard patrol boat near the disputed Senkaku Islands. |
| | | 9/11 | Kan reshuffles the cabinet. |
| | | 11/27– 11/28 | Censure motions passed against Chief Cabinet Secretary Sengoku Yoshito and MLIT Minister Mabuchi Sumio. |
| | 2011 | 1/14 | Kan reshuffles cabinet a second time. |
| | | 1/31 | Ozawa indicted for alleged violation of the Political Funds Control Law. |
| | | 3/7 | Foreign Minister Maehara Seiji resigns after it is revealed that he received an illegal donation from a foreigner. |
| | | 3/11 | The Great East Japan Earthquake. |
| | | 3/19 | LDP President Tanigaki Sadakazu rejects DPJ proposal for a grand coalition. |
| 5/6 | Kan orders the decommissioning of the Hamaoka nuclear power plant, due to high likelihood of an above-magnitude 8 earthquake occurring in the next 30 years. | | |

| | | |
|------|-------|--|
| | 6/2 | A no-confidence motion against PM Kan is defeated, 293 to 152. |
| | 7/13 | Kan calls for a gradual phase-out of nuclear power. |
| | 8/26 | Kan passes bills authorizing a ¥2 million supplementary budget for Tohoku reconstruction, the authorization of new bond issuance to finance reconstruction, and increased government investment in renewable energy. |
| | 8/30 | Kan resigns. |
| | 9/2 | Noda cabinet is formed. |
| | 9/10 | METI Minister Hachiro resigns over radiation jest. |
| | 11/11 | Noda declares Japan's intention to join Trans-Pacific Partnership talks. |
| | 12/9 | Censure motions adopted against Defense Minister Yasuo Ichikawa and Minister of Consumer Affairs Yamaoka Kenji. |
| 2012 | 1/13 | Noda reshuffles the cabinet. |
| | 2/10 | Reconstruction Agency is formed. |
| | 3/30 | Consumption tax increase bill submitted to the Diet. |
| | 4/20 | Censure motions adopted against Defense Minister Tanaka Naoki and Transportation Minister Maeda Takeshi. |
| | 6/4 | Noda reshuffles cabinet a second time. |
| | 6/8 | Ōi nuclear power plant is restarted. |
| | 6/26 | Consumption tax hike bill passes the lower house; Ozawa leaves the DPJ. |
| | 8/8 | Consumption tax hike bill passes the upper house. |
| | 8/10 | South Korean President Lee Myung-bak visits the disputed Takeshima Islands. |
| | 8/29 | Censure motion passed by LDP and Kōmeitō against PM Noda. |
| | 9/10 | Minister of Financial Services Matsushita Tadahiro commits suicide. |
| | 9/11 | Senkaku Islands are nationalized. |
| | 10/1 | Noda reshuffles cabinet a third time. |
| | 10/23 | Justice Minister Tanaka Keishu resigns over criminal yakuza connections. |
| | 11/14 | Noda calls for December 16 lower-house election. |
| | 11/16 | Lower house is dissolved for December election. |
| Noda | | |

Source: Based on "Minshūto seiken yureta 3 nen" [Three rocky years of DPJ rule]. 2012. *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*. November 18, 4.

Note: MLIT: Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport, and Tourism

METI: Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry

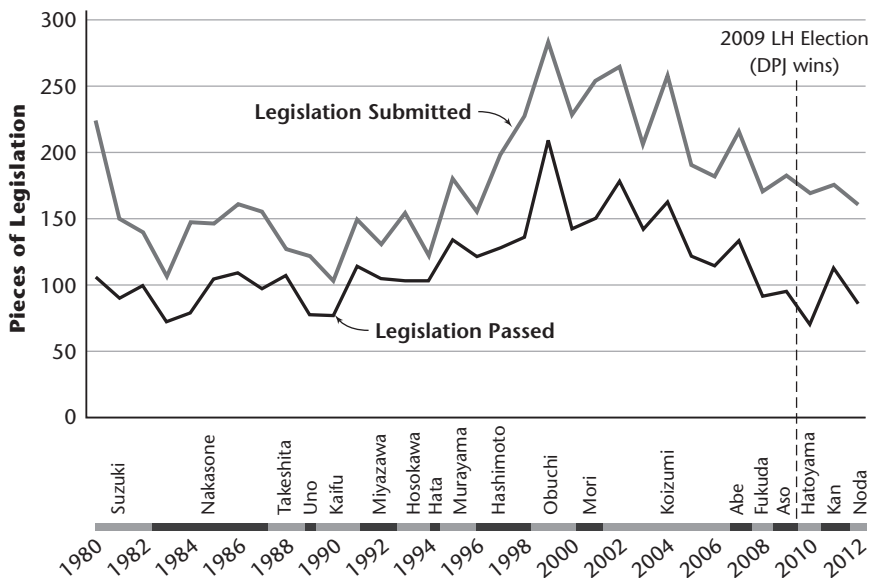


FIGURE 1.5 Legislation Submitted and Legislation Passed, 1980–2012
 Source: Cabinet Office.

Shimizu, 2013). The decline of legislative activity during the LDP governments following Koizumi is consistent with the conventional wisdom that reforms had stalled.

What is perhaps most striking from figure 1.5, however, is what occurs after the DPJ assumed power in 2009. Already in control of the upper house alongside its coalition partners, the DPJ won the lower house in a landslide on a platform of reform and change. Yet, under the Hatoyama government, legislation proposed and enacted did not noticeably increase, and in fact *declined* compared to the already low levels during the late stages of LDP rule. The spike during the Kan administration consists largely of reconstruction bills related to the March 11, 2011, Great East Japan Earthquake. After those were passed, the Noda government reverted to a low level of legislative activity. Thus, despite coming to office with an aggressive reform agenda, the DPJ government was characterized by limited overall legislative activity.

Figure 1.6 disaggregates the data from figure 1.5 according to Diet sessions. Bold dates on the x axis are Regular Diet sessions, and others are Extraordinary and Special sessions. The figure also depicts several key events, such as the 2009 lower-house election (which brought the DPJ to power), the 3/11 disaster, and periods of divided government or “twisted Diets,” during which the party in control of the lower house did not control the upper

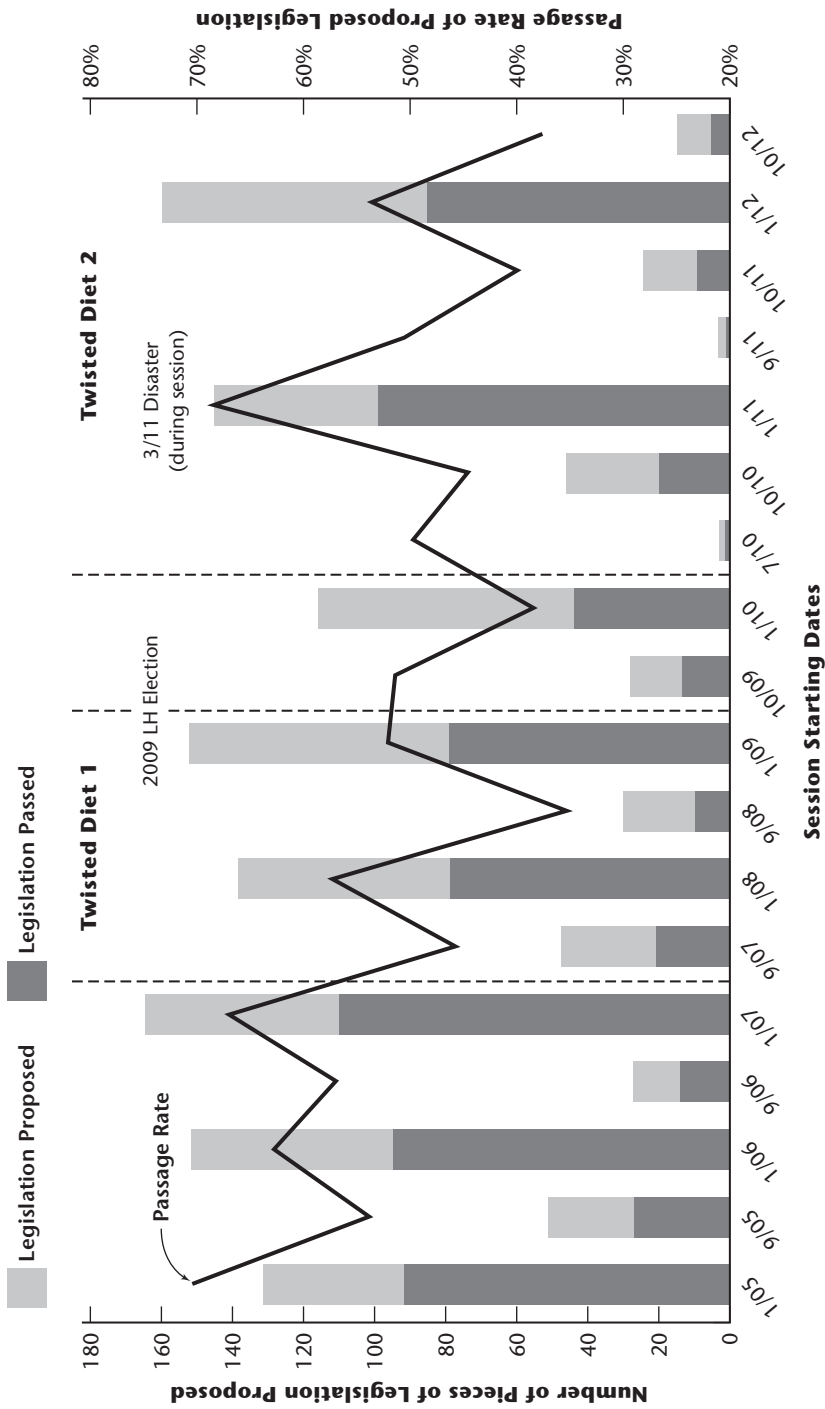


FIGURE I.6 Passage Rate of Total Proposed Legislation, Diet Sessions, 1/2005–10/2012

Source: Cabinet Office.

Note: Regular Diet sessions are in bold. The Extraordinary session from 9/16/2009 to 9/19/2009 and Special session from 8/7/2007 to 8/10/2007 are absent, since no legislation was proposed.

house. The first twisted Diet in the figure, which lasted from September 2007 to October 2009, was associated with a lower average passage rate compared to that of the preceding period. This is intuitive; legislation is more difficult to pass when the opposition controls one house of the legislature. LDP Prime Minister Fukuda cited the difficulty of operating under a twisted Diet as one reason for his resignation in September 2008. However, figure 1.7 also shows that the passage rate was extremely low immediately after the DPJ came to power with a majority in both houses, with only about 40 percent of proposed legislation passed during the Regular Diet session of 2010.

Figure 1.7 reveals perhaps the most remarkable feature of legislative patterns under the DPJ. The figure depicts the absolute numbers and percentage of cabinet-submitted legislation passed according to calendar year. After the DPJ came to power, not only did the overall passage rate of legislation decline, but the passage rate of cabinet-submitted legislation dropped sharply to historically unprecedented low levels. Under LDP rule, about 70 to 100 percent of legislation submitted by the cabinet was passed. Under the DPJ, this rate fell to a low of 55 percent in 2010 and averaged 66 percent. With the ruling coalition in control of both houses of the Diet for most of 2010, it is astonishing that legislation submitted by the cabinet would have such a low rate of passage.

The sharp drop in passage of cabinet-submitted legislation was due in large measure to the DPJ's internal discord.⁶ For example, an early tussle developed between Maehara Seiji (then minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport, and Tourism) and Ozawa Ichiro (then secretary general of the party). Ozawa, following the traditional LDP playbook, intended to use transportation policy to reward the trucking industry and peel off its support from the LDP. Maehara refused, seeing such pork-barrel politics as antithetical to the DPJ's reform agenda. In retaliation, the chairman of the Land, Infrastructure, and Transport Committee of the lower house, a member of the Ozawa group, blocked consideration of all Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport, and Tourism (MLIT)-submitted legislation.⁷ After the DPJ lost control of the upper house in 2010, lack of cooperation from opposition parties, particularly from the LDP, further impeded the DPJ's legislative agenda.⁸

6 It is worth noting that the literature on veto players generally predicts that party cohesion tends to increase policy stability (Tsebelis 1995). Contrary to these expectations, in this case, the lack of cohesion acted as an impediment to policy change. We will return to this theme later in the chapter.

7 For more detail on transportation policy under the DPJ, see the Lipsy chapter in this volume.

8 For an overview of the LDP's role as an opposition party, see Endo, Pekkanen, and Reed (2013).

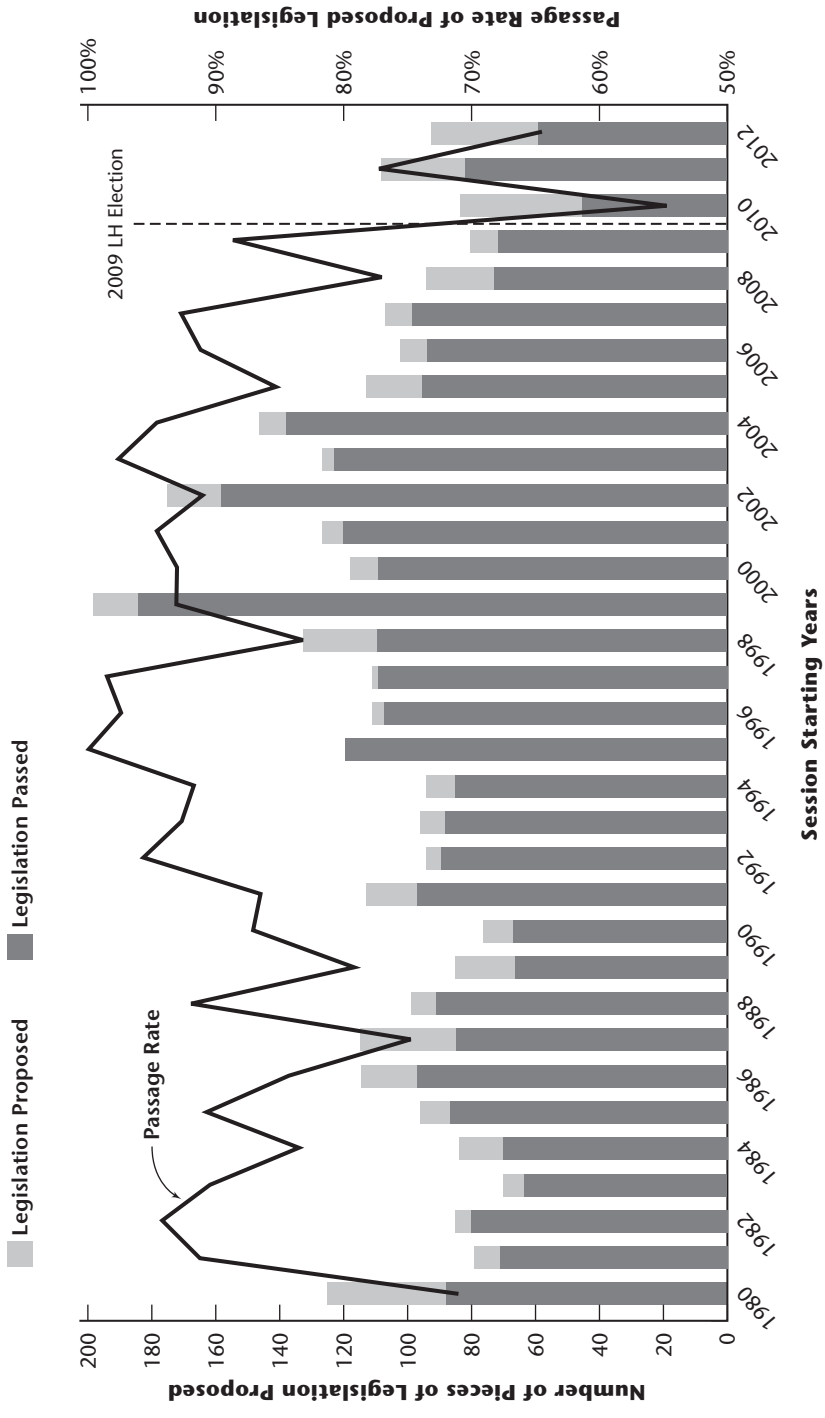


FIGURE I.7 Passage Rate of Cabinet-Submitted Legislation, 1980–2012
 Source: Cabinet Office.

We now consider the substance of DPJ policymaking. The DPJ initiated the practice of publishing campaign manifestos during the 2003 lower-house election. The LDP was forced to respond by producing its own manifesto, and the word *manifesto* (the Japanese pronunciation of manifesto) became a mainstay in election campaigns thereafter. The DPJ also came to power in 2009 campaigning on a manifesto that sought to introduce major reforms touching on several important areas of governance and policy. We examine the extent to which these campaign pledges were implemented during DPJ rule.

Table 1.2 shows the DPJ's policy promises in its manifesto for the 2009 lower-house election, after which the party ascended to power. The manifesto pledged to change Japanese society in five distinct ways: (1) End wasteful spending, (2) reduce the costs of child-rearing and education, (3) reform pensions and medical care, (4) increase regional sovereignty, and (5) reinvigorate the economy. The table also shows the status of the promised reforms as the party exited from power at the end of 2012. Table 1.3 shows

TABLE 1.2
DPJ's 2009 Manifesto Pledges and Outcomes as of 2012

| 2009 manifesto pledge | Status as of 2012 |
|--|---|
| Ending wasteful spending | |
| Completely rework 207 trillion yen state budget, and find an additional 16.8 trillion yen per year | Public works spending reduced, but overall spending reductions did not reach goals |
| Eliminate <i>amakudari</i> | Not implemented |
| Ban hereditary Diet seats | Implemented as DPJ party policy (no legislation passed) |
| Ban donations by corporations | Not implemented |
| Eliminate 80 PR lower-house seats | Not implemented |
| Reduce civil service personnel costs by 20 percent | Civil service salaries reduced by 7.8 percent |
| Child-rearing and education | |
| Pay lump-sum childbirth benefit of 550,000 yen | Increased from 380,000 yen to 420,000 yen |
| Pay 26,000 yen/month "child allowance" for all children through junior high school | Currently, monthly allowance of 13,000 yen increased to 15,000 for children under 3, and decreased to 10,000 yen for children ages 3–12 |
| Free high school education | Successfully implemented |
| Greater number of university scholarships | Tuition waivers increased. Number of students eligible for scholarship loans increased |
| Revive supplement for unemployed single mothers and fathers | Revived in December 2009 |
| Eliminate day care waiting lists | Not completely eliminated, but additional child care centers added |

TABLE 1.2 (CONTINUED)

| 2009 manifesto pledge | Status as of 2012 |
|--|---|
| Pensions and medical care | |
| Issue “pension passbooks” | Restored 13 million pension records and established online pension record tracking |
| Create unified pension system | Not implemented |
| Establish “minimum guaranteed pension” of at least 70,000 yen/month | No change. Concession to LDP for consumption tax increase |
| Abolish Health Insurance Scheme for People Aged 75 and Over | Not abolished. Concession to LDP for consumption tax increase |
| Increase the capacity of medical schools and number of doctors by 50 percent | Enrollment limit increased for medical schools; 7,793 students in 2008 to 8,991 in 2012 |
| Cancel planned social security spending cuts of 220 billion yen | Partially accomplished. Spending cuts reduced |
| Regional sovereignty | |
| Increase funds under local governments’ independent control | Largely accomplished |
| Create a household income support system for farming households | Implemented |
| Eliminate highway tolls | Plans abandoned after March 11 |
| Abolish provincial gasoline tax | Implemented, but replaced with higher de facto gasoline tax rate |
| Abolish earmarked subsidies to local governments, and replace with grants whose use can be freely determined | Implemented |
| Income compensation for livestock and dairy farmers, fisheries, and foresters | Implemented |
| Increase food self-sufficiency ratio | Remained essentially flat, and fell for wheat, fruits, and meats in 2009 and 2010, according to the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) |
| Employment and economy | |
| Reduce corporate tax rate for small and medium-sized enterprises from 18 to 11 percent | Reduced to 15 percent |
| 100,000 yen monthly allowance to job-seekers during training | “Hello Work” gives 40,000 yen/month for employers to “test” new employees |
| Foster green industry and green jobs | Encouraged through green subsidies. |
| Ban dispatch of temporary workers to manufacturing jobs | Ban on temporary contract of 30 days or less implemented. Ban on temporary dispatch to manufacturing sector not implemented |
| Establish national average minimum wage of 1,000 yen/hr | Remained at 749 yen/hr by end of 2012 |
| Equal treatment and wages regardless of gender | Not accomplished |
| Establish cap-and-trade system | Indefinitely postponed in December 2010 |
| Subsidize purchases of solar panels, “green” vehicles, and energy-saving appliances | Solar subsidies and feed-in-tariffs implemented. Subsidies for electric cars and efficient appliances |

Sources: DPJ, MLIT, METI, *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, *Yomiuri Shimbun*.

TABLE 1.3
*DPJ's Nonmanifesto Policy Pledges
 and Outcomes as of 2012*

| Item | Status |
|--|-----------|
| Consumption tax increase | Enacted |
| Futenma relocation | Advocated |
| Income tax increase for highest earners | Enacted |
| Inheritance tax base broadened | Enacted |
| Relaxation of arms export ban | Enacted |
| Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) ratification | Advocated |
| Zero nuclear energy by 2030 | Advocated |

Source: Authors.

the most notable policies and pledges undertaken by the DPJ that were not included in the manifesto. On most counts, the DPJ was unsuccessful in implementing its policy proposals. According to the *Yomiuri Shimbun* (“Minshūtō Seiken Sōkatsu” 2012), one month prior to the 2012 House of Representatives election, only 30 percent of the DPJ’s 170 original proposals had been implemented.

On ending wasteful spending, the DPJ pledged to go through every budget item to find approximately 17 trillion yen (\$188 billion at 1\$ = 90 yen) in savings, eliminate *amakudari* (postretirement bureaucrats taking private-sector jobs in the industries they oversaw), ban hereditary Diet seats, ban corporate donations, eliminate 80 proportional representation lower-house seats, and reduce civil service personnel costs by 20 percent. While the DPJ did draw media attention to its public *shiwake* process of cutting government expenditures, it did not implement the rest. It should be noted that public works spending did fall to its lowest levels since 1978 following the 2009 election, a trend that began in the early 2000s (Noble 2010; Mulgan 2010). However, the decrease was largely offset by increases in supplemental funding from the central government to the localities that was not earmarked for public works but could be used for that purpose.

In child care and education, the DPJ achieved mixed success. The DPJ implemented free high school education and tuition waivers, and the total number of students eligible for scholarships was increased at the university level. The childbirth benefit was increased slightly. However, the DPJ’s signature initiative, the child allowance (*kodomo teate*), encountered considerable headwinds due to its high price tag. The child allowance was implemented in April 2010 at half of the amount proposed in the manifesto. However, the policy was scaled back dramatically after April 2012 and was replaced with

a modestly expanded version of the child allowance, *jido teate*, which had existed prior to DPJ rule.

Pension and medical care reform was limited. The DPJ successfully restored 13 million of the 50 million pension records that had been lost before it came to power,⁹ and launched an online database for tracking and viewing pension records. The number of students in medical school increased moderately, and the magnitude of planned social security spending cuts was reduced. However, as a concession to the LDP to ensure the success of the consumption tax hike bill in 2012, the DPJ abandoned its goal of establishing a minimum guaranteed pension of 70,000 yen per month (approximately \$780 at \$1 = 90 yen) and abolishing the current Health Insurance Scheme for people aged 75 and over.

The DPJ's promise to increase regional sovereignty largely consisted of payouts to rural voters. Taking a page out of the LDP playbook, the DPJ created a household income support system for farming households and established income compensation for livestock and dairy farmers, fisheries, and foresters. However, the DPJ's plan to eliminate highway tolls—a major campaign promise—was repeatedly scaled back and ultimately abandoned after the March 11 Tohoku earthquake. Plans to abolish the provisional gasoline tax rate were also abandoned in all but name (for details, see the Lipsky chapter in this volume). There was no meaningful increase in the food self-sufficiency ratio.

The employment and economy manifesto pledges were also implemented to only a limited extent. The DPJ could not rewrite the 207 trillion yen (\$230 billion) budget and identify 16.8 trillion yen in new revenue per year—a promise that was at the heart of the party's 2009 campaign. While the DPJ did slightly reduce the corporate tax rate for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), it was by a smaller margin than originally intended. Efforts to aid the livelihood of temporary workers were only moderately successful, with a ban on the dispatch of temporary workers to manufacturing jobs never implemented. By the end of 2012, the national average minimum wage¹⁰ was still closer to 700 yen than 1000 yen, the DPJ goal (MHLW 2012). Gender equality in the workplace was far from realized;

9 During the Abe administration, a major scandal erupted in which it was discovered that the government had lost the pension records of 50 million citizens during the migration process to a computer-based system. The DPJ claims that it investigated 28.6 million of the 50 million pension records lost prior to the 2009 election and that it fully restored the records of 13 million people, reaching a total value of 1.7 trillion yen in restored funds. <http://www.dpj.or.jp/article/101716/>.

10 Japan's minimum wage is set at the regional and industry level—with the higher of the two applying to any specific company.

Gaunder's contribution to this volume provides greater detail and contends that the lack of female representation in the DPJ overall, as well as in the senior leadership of the DPJ, contributed to a lack of support for measures to increase gender equality. In environmental economic policy, the DPJ implemented a number of green subsidies for efficient cars and appliances, solar subsidies, and feed-in-tariffs, but indefinitely postponed the establishment of a cap-and-trade system in 2010.

Energy policy is one area where a departure from initial promises would have been understandable. The massive Tohoku earthquake and tsunami of 2011 and attendant nuclear disaster at the Fukushima Dai-Ichi power plant were transformative events. When the disaster struck, the Kan government had just passed an energy bill upon coming to power in 2010, which included increasing the ratio of nuclear power-generated electricity to 50 percent by 2030. However, after the Fukushima nuclear disaster, Kan called for halting all of Japan's operating nuclear reactors until "stress tests" were conducted to determine their safety. He called for a new energy policy that would eventually phase out nuclear power all together, relying instead on a new array of investments into sustainable energy. This was a bold policy change stemming from the magnitude of the disaster, Kan's background,¹¹ and his personal involvement in the crisis. However, Kan's successor, Noda, quickly moved to restart the nuclear reactors that had stopped and called for another overhaul of the long-term energy plan that did not involve a complete phase-out of nuclear power. As Kushida explains in his chapter, the DPJ's policy instability over the nuclear issue, along with delays in implementing a new nuclear safety organization, further undermined its credibility as a governing party.

Ironically, the DPJ's major policy achievement was one that seemingly contradicted its campaign manifesto and was deeply unpopular—doubling the consumption tax. The DPJ's 2009 manifesto explicitly stated that no rise in the consumption tax would occur within four years after the DPJ's election. However, less than a year later, and immediately after coming to office in June, Prime Minister Kan announced his intention to double the consumption tax rate to 10 percent by 2015. This announcement came before

11 Kan, while minister of Health in the non-LDP coalition government in power in 1993–94, became famous for uncovering a major scandal involving bureaucracy-industry collusion in covering up HIV-tainted blood used on patients. Deeply suspicious of large power companies colluding with the Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry (METI) in formulating Japan's energy policy, and having been highly frustrated at Tokyo Electric Power Company's (TEPCO) seeming incompetence in dealing with the nuclear crisis, he had few reservations in reversing their policy. (See Kushida, "The DPJ's Response to the Fukushima Nuclear Disaster," in this volume.)

the 2010 upper-house election, and the DPJ was punished in the polls.¹² Kan dropped the issue and focused most of his tenure on the passage of a set of bills to fund reconstruction of the Tohoku region.

Prime Minister Noda, from very early in his premiership, publicly stated that he was staking his political career on passing the consumption tax bill. In June 2012, Noda introduced a bill to raise the consumption tax to 8 percent in 2014 and to 10 percent in 2015. The bill caused a split within the DPJ, necessitating cooperation and coordination with the opposition LDP. Noda was forced to make concessions to the LDP, shelving pension and welfare reform until a later date to gain support for the tax hike. Noda was widely criticized for trading away core pledges in the DPJ manifesto in order to secure a tax increase that was not part of the party's campaign platform.

Noda's "Comprehensive Reform of Social Security and Tax Systems" led to an irreparable split within the ranks of the DPJ. Ozawa was adamantly opposed and threatened to walk away from the party. The bill passed with support from most of the DPJ, LDP, and Kōmeitō. In response, Ozawa and 49 of his followers—33 of whom were first-term members with grim reelection prospects—left the DPJ to form a new party, the People's Life First Party.¹³

Explaining Party Change without Policy Change

Why did the DPJ enact so little legislation while in power and implement so few of the reform proposals it had promised?¹⁴ The chapters in this volume propose several factors that account for policy stasis under the DPJ: electoral incentives, the continuing influence of rural regions, policy incoherence and infighting, strained relations with the bureaucracy, and economic and international constraints. Ironically, some of these are the very factors that facilitated the DPJ's rise to power.

¹² Gerald Curtis has suggested that Kan made this announcement because he felt that repercussions would be small due to the fact that the LDP also endorsed a tax hike (Akagawa 2010).

¹³ Ozawa's new party then joined forces with the Kizuna Party of DPJ defectors who also opposed the consumption tax increase. (People's Life First then combined with another small opposition party, but it was decimated in the 2012 lower-house election, declining to 9 seats from its previous 61.

¹⁴ Much of the material in this section is drawn from the introductory chapter in a *Journal of East Asian Studies* special issue (Lipsky and Scheiner 2012), which was published earlier and assembled articles from this volume that focus on electoral issues.

Electoral Incentives

Previous sections outlined how Japan's electoral system contributed to the rapid rise and fall of the DPJ. Electoral incentives also constrained the DPJ's ability to implement policy reforms once in power. McElwain's chapter shows how electoral reforms in the 1990s made it more difficult for any party to enact fundamental policy reforms. Since electoral reforms weakened incumbency advantage and reduced the malapportionment of districts that had long supported the LDP, reelection of candidates has been increasingly determined by partisan swings rather than by past performance or the strength of local networks. Greater electoral volatility under this new system has reduced the ability of young, reformist politicians to establish themselves politically. The point is highlighted in Gaunder's chapter, which shows how female candidates, who are the most likely instigators of reform on gender issues, were swept from office quickly in both major parties. Volatility also thinned out the ranks of experienced politicians familiar with the policymaking process.

Japan's new electoral system may also reduce the scope for policy differentiation among the major parties. The lack of a major policy cleavage is largely consistent with the predictions of the literature on party competition under majoritarian electoral rules; as both parties attempt to court the median voter, policy positions have converged and dramatic policy shifts have become less likely (Downs 1957). As Scheiner highlights, candidates from both the LDP and DPJ have converged toward one another in their policy appeals. Lipsy provides one example of how this limited the scope of DPJ reforms: Several of the DPJ's popular initiatives in the transportation sector were co-opted by the LDP government, eliminating some low-hanging fruit before the DPJ assumed power.

Moreover, as Scheiner shows—and as expected by Downs (1957)—as the LDP's and DPJ's policy positions have become more similar, voters have increasingly cast ballots based on “valence” (that is, nonpolicy) evaluations of the parties. Previously, voters had given great weight to the political experience of candidates, but as the party system became nationalized, elections were decided by voters' images of the LDP and DPJ as agents of change (Reed, Scheiner, and Thies 2012). With elections increasingly determined by party image and not by differences in policy, it has become less likely that a new party will come to power with a clear mandate to implement significant, specific change. For example, as Gaunder highlights, rather than proposing and implementing meaningful policies favoring women, both parties have turned to “female assassin” candidates to demonstrate their reform bona fides and therefore appeal to fickle popular sentiment.

In addition, as Lipsky discusses, Japan's current electoral system, which places emphasis on broad appeal to the median voter, makes it risky to enact policy reforms that impose diffuse costs on the general public. This has had an adverse impact on Japan's ability to deal with several important policy issues. On energy efficiency and climate change, Japan has struggled to enact and maintain policies that encourage conservation by elevating energy costs for the general consumer. Similarly, it has been excruciatingly difficult for the Japanese government to address lingering budget deficits by increasing revenues. Noda managed to raise the consumption tax in 2012, but much like his predecessors who sought to do the same, he was met with a powerful electoral backlash.

Continuing Influence of Rural Regions

Japan's new electoral incentives in and of themselves do not imply policy stasis; countries governed by majoritarian electoral systems frequently engage in major policy reforms, as seen in the United States and Great Britain during the 1930s and 1980s. Another factor that has limited policy change in Japan, and more specifically under the DPJ, is the fact that Japanese policymakers have not been able to fully cater to the median voter, due to the continuing influence of rural regions in Japan's political system.

For sure, the influence of rural regions has declined compared to the heyday of LDP rule. Malapportionment in the lower house has been substantially reduced, and rural subsidies have been cut substantially over the past two decades, particularly with the Koizumi reforms. However, as Hasunuma points out, rural areas still exercise outsized influence over Japanese politics.¹⁵ Despite their declining overall representation, rural residents have acted as swing voters in recent elections (Lipsky and Scheiner 2012). Moreover, as Shimizu argues, redistricting and local autonomy have cut against lower-house electoral incentives by increasing the leverage of rural politicians vis-à-vis central politicians. Finally, although Japan's new electoral rules have placed greater emphasis on urban voters, rural voters tend to turn out more reliably. Because overall turnout itself is volatile, cultivating the rural vote has remained an important electoral strategy for both political parties as an insurance policy against low-turnout elections.

Recognizing these realities, Ozawa, the DPJ's electoral mastermind, pursued what became known as a *kawakami* (upstream) strategy, which placed great emphasis on appealing to rural voters who lived near the upper reaches of Japanese rivers. The DPJ manifesto incorporated benefits specifically

15 See also Reed, Scheiner, and Thies (2012).

targeted toward such voters, such as household income support for farmers, and Ozawa sought to cultivate support from interest groups more traditionally associated with the LDP. As Hasunuma points out, spending cuts to rural areas were difficult for the DPJ precisely because its electoral strategy depended on appealing to those constituencies. This strategy was a critical element of the DPJ's electoral success, particularly during the 2007 upper-house election. However, the DPJ's rural strategy also split the party between reformers such as Okada and Maehara and traditional politicians exemplified by Ozawa. This mirrors a similar split in the LDP in recent years, which was particularly salient under Koizumi. The DPJ achieved considerable success in the 2004 and 2007 upper-house and 2009 lower-house elections by following Ozawa's *kawakami* strategy, but the LDP turned the tide in the 2010 upper-house election primarily by winning back rural single-member districts.

Internecine Conflict

Japanese political parties face strong electoral incentives to cater to urban, floating voters, who are generally enamored with reformist politicians promising sweeping change. At the same time, the influence of rural regions remains strong. This raises a natural question: Why has the Japanese political system not split along something resembling an urban-rural cleavage, with the DPJ catering to reform-minded urban voters and the LDP to conservative rural voters? Such a split has been predicted by much of the recent work on electoral politics in Japan (Rosenbluth and Thies 2010). Instead, the primary expression of the urban-rural cleavage in recent years has occurred within the two major parties, with both the LDP and DPJ split between reformist and traditionalist politicians.

Several chapters in this volume shed light on this intriguing outcome. As Hasunuma points out, although the electoral overrepresentation of rural interests has diminished considerably in recent years, they are still overrepresented in the upper-house prefectural districts, and the nearly coequal status of the two houses makes it imperative to secure double majorities. Both parties must therefore craft political platforms that appeal not only to urban floating voters but also to local, rural constituencies. This makes it less feasible for either of the two major parties to ignore one constituency or the other.

This dynamic has been exacerbated by lower-house electoral volatility in recent years. The lower house has delivered extreme outcomes in three consecutive elections, particularly in single-member districts: The LDP captured 73 percent of single-member district seats in 2005, the DPJ 74 percent (2009), and the LDP 79 percent (2012). As a consequence, the LDP and

DPJ in recent years have represented much broader constituencies in power than as opposition parties. This reduced internal cohesion and legislative productivity within the governing parties, as party leaders struggled to reconcile constituents with diverse and conflicting interests. A similar pattern has been observed in American politics, where legislative productivity under unified government is often no higher than during periods of divided government (Mayhew 1991). Newly minted politicians from outside each party's traditional base of support (the so-called Koizumi and Ozawa "Children") became major sources of internal discord.

In addition, the electoral system creates disincentives for partisan realignment that would promote greater policy coherence within parties and differentiation between parties, a point Scheiner makes in his chapter. The dynamics of two-party competition have ironically acted as a constraint on partisan reorganization; despite internal policy disagreements, legislators have strong incentives to remain inside their current parties. Examining transportation policy, Lipsky shows how intraparty divisions between reformists and traditionalist politicians in both the LDP and DPJ have complicated policymaking and often resulted in incoherent policy outcomes.

Aside from these electoral incentives, the depth of the internecine struggles that stymied the DPJ also surely owed something to the personalities of key party leaders and the particular circumstances that prevailed as the party ascended to power. The DPJ came to power with an uncomfortable power structure. Ozawa had been the party president of the DPJ from March 2006 until May 2009, when he resigned due to a financial scandal. While Hatoyama became prime minister under the first DPJ government, Ozawa remained a major power broker within the party, with significant influence particularly over newly elected party members who had secured victory in traditionally LDP-leaning areas. Yet, Ozawa was not part of the cabinet, due to the repercussions of the ongoing financing scandal. This created a dual power structure within the DPJ government, which came to be split between the cabinet, initially led by Hatoyama, and the party, led by Ozawa.

As shown by Kushida in his chapter on IT policy, the fall from power by Ozawa and Hatoyama within the DPJ created significant policy incoherence when the Kan administration rejected many of the longer-term trajectories put in place by the Hatoyama/Ozawa appointees. Then, as shown by Kushida in his chapter on the Fukushima nuclear disaster, Ozawa supporters within the DPJ aggressively mounted a campaign to remove Kan from power, going so far as to join forces with the LDP to threaten supporting a vote of no confidence. As Reed puts it in his chapter, Ozawa acted "as an independent

entrepreneur within the party, using the candidates he had recruited . . . as a weapon against the leadership.” In summer 2009, Ozawa did in fact bolt from the party, but, despite his seemingly large base of support within the party, in the end only roughly three dozen members of the lower house, mostly facing a relatively low likelihood of reelection, left with Ozawa.

Relations with the Bureaucracy

The DPJ came to power with a mantra of empowering politicians against the elite bureaucracy, which had fallen from grace through numerous scandals and perceived mismanagement of the economy and many aspects of society. Ironically, this acted as a constraint on the DPJ’s ability to implement its reform agenda. The DPJ initially planned to centralize control of budgets and personnel at the level of the prime minister’s office by creating a National Strategy Bureau and Cabinet Personnel Bureau within the prime minister’s office. However, this required legal changes, so the Hatoyama administration began by creating a National Strategy Office, installing Kan, then vice minister, as its head. However, there was disagreement within the party about how much power to give this new National Strategy Bureau, with Kan seeing it as more of a think tank without authority over the budget. When Hatoyama fell from power within the DPJ and the party lost its upper-house majority under Kan’s leadership, the idea of a centralized bureau to control ministry personnel disappeared.

The other major initiative of the DPJ in attempting to curtail the influence of the bureaucracy was to make bureaucrats subservient to politicians in the decision-making process. The role of political appointees was expanded, with the top three levels of bureaucratic leadership occupied by politicians. The DPJ initially removed bureaucrats from the decision-making processes and restricted the flow of information to the bureaucracy. However, because the DPJ was beset by internal discord and did not have an effective mechanism to coordinate policy within the party, the outcome was widespread confusion and uncertainty about the government’s objectives and policy goals. For example, Foreign Ministry officials lamented that they did not know what Japan’s official stance was on major policy issues. Foreign counterparts grew frustrated as they received contradictory messages. Policymaking stagnated as the appointed political leadership of each ministry ended up overseeing minute details of policy themselves. By the time Kan came to power, the DPJ had reverted to allowing bureaucratic management of everyday policy, leading to some critiques that they ended up more dependent on bureaucrats than the LDP (*Nikkei* 2012). Moreover, as Kushida (IT chapter) points out, the increased political control vis-à-vis

bureaucrats magnified policy volatility when political infighting within the party led to new political leadership that wanted to focus on removing the influence of the previous government.

Economic Constraints

It is also clear that ruling governments in Japan in recent years have been constrained by economic realities prevailing since the burst of the bubble in 1991. For the past two decades, the Japanese economy has stagnated, the primary exception being during the period of sustained growth from 2003 to 2007, which exceeded the performance of the United States and major European economies according to some measures, such as GDP per capita. Weak growth meant weak revenues and high expenditures on countercyclical economic measures. Japan also has the most rapidly aging population in the developed world, which has put enormous pressure on the pension and health system. Combined with Japan's high level of preexisting public debt, these factors limit the scope for new, expensive policy measures.

The DPJ was clearly hampered by this budgetary reality as it sought to enact its core campaign promises. As Lipsky documents, the elimination of highway tolls and other transportation taxes engendered fierce opposition not only from the Ministry of Finance but also from budget hawks, such as Fujii Hirohisa, within the DPJ. The child allowance was also widely criticized as a throwaway of public money and was ultimately scaled back as the party struggled to secure adequate resources to fund the measure. The March 11, 2011, Tohoku earthquake and tsunami put further pressure on the budget, as expensive reconstruction and nuclear safety measures were prioritized. The earthquake contributed directly to the cancellation of several central DPJ campaign promises, most importantly the elimination of highway tolls, which was scrapped to raise revenues for reconstruction.

The nuclear meltdown at Fukushima Dai-Ichi has not only compounded Japan's budgetary problems, but it also constrains Japan's ability to pursue further reform in the area of energy policy, because the country is forced to rely on fossil fuels for its short-term and medium-term energy needs. The Japanese government had already made it clear that the 25 percent CO₂ reductions target advocated by Hatoyama would need to be abandoned. The disaster solidified Japan's decision to abandon the Kyoto Protocol.

International Structural Constraints

The DPJ's foreign-policy record illustrates the international structural constraints that limit the scope for major policy change. The DPJ came to office promising better relations with Japan's Asian neighbors and a

somewhat tougher approach toward the United States. Relations with the United States were indeed strained early on, as Hatoyama attempted to renegotiate the Futenma base relocation issue. However, the DPJ's foreign policy came to be defined by rapidly deteriorating relations with China over the Senkaku/Diaoyu territorial dispute and policies closely mirroring the LDP on U.S.-Japan relations. In this instance, the structural constraints on international relations proposed by realist scholars such as Kenneth Waltz and John Mearsheimer appear to have considerable credence: The geopolitical realities of East Asia, with a volatile North Korea and rapidly rising China, necessitate ever closer ties with the United States and limit Japan's maneuverability in the realm of foreign policy.

As Hughes argues in this volume, the DPJ's foreign policy was constrained by domestic and international structural factors, which led the party to pursue a trajectory similar to that of the LDP despite coming to office with an ambitious grand-strategy vision. As Hughes notes, Hatoyama's blunders in dealing with the Futenma relocation issue, by promising a move before negotiating with the United States or a new target location, was not dissimilar to what the LDP had done over the past several decades. However, it ended up sparking the controversy that led to his downfall. Territorial disputes between China and South Korea led to a precipitous decline in support for Kan in late 2010, and an attempt to ease restrictions on weapons sales abroad was thwarted by the Social Democratic Party during the 2010 budget negotiations. Consequently, the DPJ defaulted back into a strategy in the style of the LDP, characterized not by "reluctant realism" but by a "resentful realism." Sneider similarly notes that on both sides of the Pacific, policymakers perceived a return to the LDP-era postwar consensus, particularly regarding the U.S.-Japan security relationship, which became strongly evident by the time of the Noda government.

Organization of the Book

We conclude by providing an overview of the volume and brief descriptions of the chapters. The book is divided into five sections: electoral structure, the DPJ, domestic policy, foreign policy, and disaster response.

Electoral Structure

The first four chapters focus on electoral structure and the transformed political logic following the electoral institutional change in 1994, and the continuing influence of local politics.

Kenneth Mori McElwain shows that the postwar electoral dominance of the LDP was founded upon two primary factors: a strong incumbency

advantage, which insulated its legislators from declining party popularity, and the malapportionment of districts, which overvalued the electoral clout of the party's rural base. He contends that the LDP's demise in 2009 was due to the reversal of both factors, each of which was related to the electoral reforms in the 1990s. McElwain demonstrates that elections are becoming more "nationalized," due to the growing weight that voters attach to the attractiveness of party leaders. Past performance has become a less reliable predictor of incumbent reelection, giving way to large partisan swings that are increasingly correlated across districts. Also, malapportionment was reduced almost by one-half in 1994, meaning that rural votes are now worth fewer seats. As a result, parties that can attract swing voters nationally are better positioned for victory than those with a narrow regional base.

Ethan Scheiner argues that Japan's electoral system, which emphasizes first-past-the-post, single-member district rules, has led the country's party system to become consolidated around the LDP and DPJ. At the same time, Japan's electoral rules also make it likely that the two parties do not differ markedly in their policy positions, as well as hinder the emergence of new partisan alignments that could offer more clearly distinct policy options. Put differently, Japan's electoral rules have encouraged the development of what is essentially a two-party system, but one in which party alternation in power need not produce sharp policy change.

Steven R. Reed analyzes the resources and strategies of Japan's third parties, since the introduction of the mixed-member electoral system in 1994, in an effort to explain why some have failed while others have survived. He examines the policy profile, electoral strategy, and resource bases of small parties in order to determine what distinguishes the survivors from the failures. Reed finds that the key factor for third-party survival in Japan is party organization rooted within civil society, with the capacity to elect significant numbers to local assemblies. Third parties that fail primarily have little organization of their own and depend upon candidate *kōenkai*, a less effective organizational structure under the new mixed electoral system.

Kay Shimizu contends that neither the DPJ nor the LDP currently has a stable local voter base across the country. The dominance of the LDP was long buttressed by the existence of a strong political support base in the rural areas led by local politicians who worked on behalf of national LDP politicians seeking reelection. In recent years, municipal mergers have drastically weakened the LDP's support base by reducing the number of local politicians and redrawing electoral district boundaries. Surprisingly, the main opposition party, the DPJ, could not take full advantage of the new institutional arrangements. Instead, local politicians became more independent of both major parties. As a result, at a time of increasing numbers of

floating voters, neither of Japan's two major parties has a reliable local base across the country. To succeed, both parties must pay attention to the changing needs of the increasingly independent—and very often still rural—localities.

The DPJ

The next two chapters analyze aspects of the DPJ as a political party, including new candidate recruitment and media coverage.

Daniel M. Smith, Robert J. Pekkanen, and Ellis S. Krauss examine the recruitment of new candidates within the DPJ, finding that the background of DPJ candidates has changed over time and that the vast majority of DPJ candidates today do not have political experience prior to DPJ membership. They examine how the party has evolved in character and grown over time, based on an extensive data set of the recruitment methods, personal backgrounds, and electoral and legislative careers of DPJ candidates to the House of Representatives from 1996 to 2012, as well as personal interviews with DPJ politicians and party staff. They find that the DPJ has been largely successful at using innovations in candidate recruitment to diversify its candidate pool and gradually build the party from weak beginnings. However, they also find that members who started their careers in the LDP and other founding parties continue to dominate the DPJ leadership.

Yukio Maeda points out that new political parties rarely succeed in gaining the support of a majority of respondents in opinion polls. Established political parties control a large share of partisan supporters, so new parties face an uphill struggle in convincing independents and supporters of other parties to support them. Indeed, in advanced industrial democracies, it is not common for a new party to cultivate a majority within its first several years of activity. However, the DPJ is a rare example of such a party, having achieved majority status just ten years after its founding. Previous research on aggregate partisanship focuses primarily on stable party systems, and provides few clues to understanding the process that a new political party follows to develop support among the electorate. Thus, it is worthwhile to analyze how DPJ partisanship has grown since the party was first formed in 1996. Maeda empirically examines the growth of DPJ partisanship, using a time-series statistical analysis of *Mainichi Shimbun* monthly opinion polls from the party's founding to December 2011. He also examines the quantity of news reports about the DPJ in the mass media, which changed as a function of the electoral fortunes of the party over the years. Maeda shows that an increase in DPJ partisanship is a consequence of electoral victory, rather

than a prerequisite for it, and that a government party has an advantage over opposition parties in attracting the attention of the mass media, and consequently, the attention of the electorate.

Domestic Policy

This volume includes four chapters on domestic policy in the areas of energy efficiency and transportation, information technology, decentralization, and women.

Phillip Lipsky demonstrates that although the DPJ came to power in 2009 promising significant transportation-sector reform, it struggled to implement its proposals. He argues that the DPJ's initiatives faltered due to the legacy of "efficiency clientelism." Historically, Japanese transportation policy combined two imperatives: (1) to encourage efficiency by raising the cost of energy-inefficient transportation, and (2) to redistribute benefits to supporters of the incumbent LDP. Because of the legacy of efficiency clientelism, DPJ campaign pledges—designed to appeal broadly to the general public by reducing transportation costs—ran up against the prospect of sharp declines in revenues and energy efficiency. Efficiency clientelism was well suited to the political realities in Japan prior to the 1990s, but recent developments have undercut its viability. This raises profound questions about the sustainability of Japan's energy-efficiency achievements.

Kenji E. Kushida finds that Japan's information and communications technology (ICT) policy, which straddled the two logics of Japan's political economy—strategic or developmental, and clientelistic or distributive—continued to be pulled in both directions after the DPJ came to power. The DPJ's campaign promises had suggested it would curtail the distributive elements of politics while focusing on bold reforms. In ICT, bold reforms were initially promulgated, but they contained a surprising degree of seemingly distributive regional infrastructure projects. Moreover, policy volatility was high, because the bold reform proposal itself was retracted as personnel were reshuffled in an internal DPJ political upheaval. This chapter shows how politicians leading the policymaking process over bureaucrats, the DPJ's mantra, can pave the way for bold reform initiatives, but that the very nature of having political leadership responsible for policy can lead to greater policy volatility and politicized policy.

Linda Hasunuma contends that the LDP-Kōmeitō coalition accelerated decentralization reforms and transformed the geographical, political, and financial structure of Japan's local governments. Because these reforms were blamed for deepening regional inequalities, the DPJ was able to capitalize on

this issue and win majorities in both houses by pledging to restore “people’s livelihoods.” Once in power, however, the DPJ faced incentives to restore resources to rural areas because rural voters were still pivotal in the upper house and had switched their support from the LDP to the DPJ. Electoral incentives forced the DPJ to not only put the brakes on decentralization but also to reverse some of those policies in order to provide a cushion to groups that had been made worse off by the previous government’s reforms to local governments. The party that had once championed decentralization while in opposition was restoring resources to rural areas—much like the old LDP.

Alisa Gaunder points out that although the DPJ successfully elected a large number female candidates to the Diet, the DPJ’s victory did not have a substantive policy impact for women. The DPJ saw 40 of its 46 female candidates elected in the 2009 lower-house election; 26 were first-time candidates. Recently, both the LDP and the DPJ have supported more women as “change” candidates in response to changing electoral incentives that favor broad appeals. The DPJ’s victory, however, did not have a large impact on women in terms of governance or policy. An exploration of child allowance, day care provision, and dual-surname legislation under the DPJ reveals that low seniority and the lack of a critical mass prevented DPJ women from overcoming significant veto points. The electoral incentives of the emerging two-party system have resulted in a larger number of women in office, but the volatility of the system has sustained a weak voice for women in policymaking.

Foreign Policy

The next two chapters focus on foreign policy. Christopher W. Hughes challenges the dominant negative critiques of the foreign policy of the DPJ. He contends that the DPJ possesses a coherent grand-strategy vision, capable of securing Japan’s national interests in an age of multipolarity and centered on a less dependent and more proactive role in the U.S.-Japan alliance, strengthened Sino-Japanese ties, and enhanced East Asian regionalism. However, the DPJ has failed to implement its policy, due to domestic and international structural pressures. Consequently, the DPJ is defaulting back to a strategy in the style of the LDP. Hughes suggests that Japanese and U.S. policymakers should recognize the risks of a strategy characterized not by “reluctant realism” but by the more-destabilizing “resentful realism.”

Daniel Sneider provides an account of the DPJ’s mandate to alter Japan’s foreign-policy position, shifting away from dependence on the U.S.-Japan security alliance and toward realignment with Asia. Instead of domestic

reform and a rebalancing of the U.S.-Japan security alliance, a series of foreign policy and security-policy blunders ensued following the DPJ's electoral victory. Sneider argues that these blunders were shaped by a combination of uncertainty of purpose and the DPJ's inability to quickly transition from the rhetoric of opposition politics to the realities of governance. As a result of these missteps, Prime Minister Noda attempted to restore the centrality of the U.S.-Japan security alliance after assuming office. However, Sneider argues that this should not be interpreted as a simple reversion to LDP-era policy. The DPJ still attempted to shift away from a policy of absolute dependence and subordination to U.S. policy, and Japanese political discourse now embraces trilateral cooperation between the United States, Japan, and Asia in an effort to manage the rise of China.

Disaster Response

In the final chapter, Kenji E. Kushida explores the political dynamics following Japan's March 11, 2011, triple disaster of earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear catastrophe. The DPJ was widely blamed for a chaotic initial response to the nuclear accident at the Fukushima Dai-Ichi nuclear power plant. Prime Minister Kan was even accused of severely worsening the crisis by intervening personally in the rescue effort. In the medium term, the DPJ's stance toward nuclear power was volatile and controversial, oscillating from Kan's move to completely end Japan's dependence on nuclear power to Prime Minister Noda Yoshihiko's call to restart existing reactors even before a new nuclear governance structure was in place. Kushida shows how the DPJ's initial chaotic response stemmed from a combination of the government's inadequate contingency planning and problematic organizational structures inherited from the LDP era. Kan's own leadership style and negative predisposition toward industry and government bureaucracies, shaped by his previous experiences, led to his personal interventions, which did not substantially worsen the crisis. The DPJ's medium-term policy volatility toward nuclear power stemmed from structural and organizational tensions within the DPJ itself, and opportunistic politicking by the opposition LDP in the context of a "twisted Diet."

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As the Liberal Democratic Party searches for its own identity in the early twenty-first century, *The Rise and Fall of Japan's LDP* gives us a fine historical sketch of how it managed to stay in office so long and what made it so powerful. In its sophisticated application of Historical Institutionalism, this book offers important insights into both what has made Japanese politics unique and why institutional change is so difficult to achieve. "This book is likely to become the reference on the LDP and electoral politics in Japan. The Rise and Fall of Japan's LDP is built around terrific insights, which, I am convinced, are correct. The Liberal Democratic Party of Japan (自由民主党, Jiyū-Kōmei no Minshutō), frequently abbreviated to LDP or Jimintō (保守党), is a conservative political party in Japan. The LDP has almost continuously been in power since its foundation in 1955—a period called the 1955 System—with the exception of a period between 1993 and 1994, and again from 2009 to 2012. In the 2012 election it regained control of government. It holds 285 seats in the lower house and 113 seats in the upper house, and in coalition with the Komeito The Democratic and Republican Party.

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