Politics in East Asia

III-B Parties and the Diet

The Liberal Democratic Party

- Party in power (1955-)
- Concentrated formal power structure
  - Autocratic Party?
- Organization
- Factions
- Zoku

Organizational Structure of LDP

- President
- Secretary General
- Executive Council
- Policy Affairs Research Council (PARC)
- Annual Conference
- Local branches
Factions in the LDP

- 5 Factions in the 1955 system
  - Tanaka (Hashimoto), Fukuda (Mori), Ohira (Horiuchi), Nakasone (Eto-Kamei), Miki (Takamura)
- Each group based on personal ties
- No specific ideological orientation

Faction Functions 1

- Candidate nomination
  - Intra-party competition
- Electoral support
- Fund raising
- Advising
Faction Functions 2

- Study groups
- Promotion within a faction
  - Seniority based
- Allocation of party and government positions
  - Cabinet shuffling

Faction Functions 3

- Selection of President
- Coalition of factions
- Inter-faction competition
- Generation shift

Coalition dynamics

- Political Scandals and Crisis
  - Poor election results
  - Resignation of the LDP president
  - Majority coalition
Factions in other parties

- Social Democratic Party
  - Ideology-based factions
  - Left (Socialists) vs. Right (Liberals)
  - Party split
- Democratic Socialist Party
  - Region and leader-based

The Diet

- Bicameral Parliament in Japan
- House of Representatives
- House of Councillors
- Both are elected bodies

The House of Representatives

- Similar to British House of Commons
- 512 members under the 1955 system, 500 after 1994 (=>480)
- Maximum 4-year term
- Elects Prime Minister
- Vote of nonconfidence vs. dissolution

HR Current Status (2004)

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The Diet: The House of Councillors

- Similar to U.S. Senate
- 252 members
- Fixed 6 year-term (Half elected every 3 years)
- Less influential than the House of Representatives
- Veto power

HC Current Status

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Is the Diet important?

- LDP’s one-party dominance
- Strong bureaucracy
- No separation of powers
- Cabinet sponsored bills

Legislative process

- 120-30 bills passed per year in the 70s and the 80s
- 30-40% passed with amendments
- Standing Committees
- Steering committees
Opposition parties’ legislative tactics

- Delay
- Boycott
- Cow walk
- Filibuster
- LDP’s conciliatory legislative management