

**“Changes of “Zoku-giin” in the LDP:  
The Impact of Prime Minister Koizumi’s Leadership”**

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## 1. Introduction

The policy-making process in Japan has been characterized as a highly centralized governmental system in combination with decentralized decision-making within the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). For many decades following World War II, Japan was considered to be a highly centralized country. For example, a bountiful literature has shown that the central government played a significant role in the nation's remarkable economic growth.<sup>1</sup> The LDP was the ruling party during the period from 1955 to 1993. Then in 1993 the Party was temporarily relegated to the position of an opposition party only to recover in 1995 when it emerged as the dominant member in a series of coalition governments. The LDP has thus played a major role in Japanese policy-making within a highly centralized governmental system.

On the other hand, policy-making process within the LDP has been quite decentralized. Although the Prime Minister is the President of the LDP, his leadership within the LDP policy-making was limited by the LDP's highly fragmented decision-making process.<sup>2</sup> In a vast majority of circumstances, "Habatsu" (a faction) and "Zoku-Giin" (Policy tribes) were the major actors in the LDP policy-making process. In particular, a number of important studies reported that "Zoku-Giin" played an important role in the LDP starting in the 1970s.<sup>3</sup> "Zoku-giin" are generally defined as "politicians who have developed expertise, experience and contacts in a specialized policy area" (Krauss and Nyblade 2005, 358).<sup>4</sup> They have been able to influence the policy process through the practices of ruling party review of government-sponsored bills and subsequent discussions in the Diet committee.

However, the role of "Zoku-giin" has changed significantly starting in the 1990s. A great deal of recent commentary now suggests that the policy-making process within the ruling LDP has changed, especially during the Administration of Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi. At the very beginning of his accession to power the Prime Minister proclaimed that he would destroy the existing "LDP system".<sup>5</sup> In particular, he tried to dismantle "Habatsu" in the LDP by terminating faction-based Cabinet appointments and other political appointees. He also tried to exert stronger Prime Ministerial leadership over policy-making by abolishing the preliminary ruling party review practice of government-sponsored bills, which is one of the main political practices established by "Zoku-giin" within the LDP. In this sense, the Prime Minister has tried to diminish the power of "Zoku-giin". Under Koizumi Administration, it is now often pointed out that the Prime Minister can exercise his leadership in policy making in ways that have not been seen before.<sup>6</sup>

This paper aims at describing how the policy-making process in Japan has changed during Koizumi's Administration, casting its focus especially on the contemporary political place of the "Zoku-giin" in policy-making. Some empirical research suggests that policy-making in the LDP has changed since the 1990s,<sup>7</sup> but these scholars and journalists don't grapple squarely with the dynamics and role played by the "Zoku-giin." Since the work by Sato and Matsuzaki (1986), Inoguchi and Iwai (1987), and Iwai (1989) in the 1980s, there have been no academic studies which focus directly on the "Zoku-giin."

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<sup>1</sup> For the classic study on Japan's developmental state see Johnson (1982).

<sup>2</sup> See Krauss and Nyblade (2005).

<sup>3</sup> See Sato and Matsuzaki (1986), Inoguchi and Iwai (1987), and Iwai (1989).

<sup>4</sup> In journalism and some works by political scientists, "Zoku-giin" is referred with negative image. Sometimes they claim that "Zoku-giin" produce the collusion among politicians, bureaucrats and business. For example, see Nihon Keizai Shimbun Sha (1983).

<sup>5</sup> Yomiuri Shimbun April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2004, Morning Edition.

<sup>6</sup> See Krauss and Nyblade (2005), Machidori (2005), and Noble (2006).

<sup>7</sup> See Tatebayashi (2004), Krauss and Nyblade (2005), Machidori (2005), Noble (2006), and Pekkanen, Nyblade and Krauss (2006).

In Chapter 2, I briefly outline the policy-making process in Japanese national government. In particular I will explain the general character of the policy-making process in the Japanese parliamentary system and illustrate why the “Zoku-giin” have exerted such significant political influence. In Chapter 3, I describe some significant changes that have occurred in policy-making starting in the 1990s. These changes have enabled Prime Minister Koizumi to exercise leadership over the policy-making process. In the fourth chapter, I will explain data and variables used in this analysis. In Chapter 5, I show how contemporary LDP members behave in policy-making process. As Prime Minister Koizumi has tried to abandon the prior examination by the LDP, politicians in the LDP should have changed their behavior in policy-making process. In the final Chapter, I will summarize arguments and draw conclusions.

## 2. “Zoku-giin” and preliminary review of government-sponsored bills

A long-established political practice asserted by the LDP is to give opportunity to the Party to provide preliminary review of proposed legislative bills before formally submitted by the Cabinet to the Diet. The review practice enables the LDP, and especially “policy tribes” (Zoku-giin), to significantly influence the policy-making process. Abandoning this preliminary review arrangement would mark a dramatic change in Japanese politics.

According to Constitution, the Diet is the highest lawmaking body.<sup>8</sup> The Diet consists of the House of Representatives (Lower House) and the House of Councilors (Upper House). The former has a priority in some aspects.<sup>9</sup> For example, the Lower House’s choice overrides the Upper House’s decision of Budget, Ratification of Treaty, and Selection of the Prime Minister.<sup>10</sup> Both Houses have the same powers with respect to ordinary law-making,<sup>11</sup> although the Lower House can override the Upper House’s decision by passing that bill by a majority of two-thirds or more.<sup>12</sup> However, since the new constitution was adopted in 1947, the ruling party did not achieve a two-thirds majority in the Lower House until 2005. So it was virtually impossible for the Lower House to override the Upper House’s decision. As a result of the general election in 2005, the coalition government claims more than two-thirds of the seats in the Lower House, but they have never tried such override.

Bills submitted to the Diet are divided into two categories. One is Government-sponsored bill (“Kakuho”) submitted by the Cabinet. Another is a bill submitted by Diet members (“Giin Rippo”).<sup>13</sup> From here, I will mention how each type of bills goes through policy-making process.<sup>14</sup> First, mid-level officers in ministries draw up a first draft of government-sponsored bills, coordinating informally with other related ministries, interests groups and politicians. At the same time, the Cabinet Legislative Bureau (“Naikaku Hosei Kyoku”) examines the draft to confirm that it is not against the

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<sup>8</sup> It is stipulated in Article 41 of the Constitution that “The Diet shall be the highest organ of state power, and shall be the sole law-making organ of the State”.

<sup>9</sup> The House of Representatives has a priority in budget, ratification of the treaty, selection of the Prime Minister and so on. If the resolutions in each House are different in these policies, the resolution of the House of Representatives has a priority to that of the House of Councilors.

<sup>10</sup> Article 60, 61 and 67 of the Constitution.

<sup>11</sup> Article 59 of the Constitution.

<sup>12</sup> When the choice of the Lower House is different from that of the Upper House, both House can establish the Conference Committee of both Houses to accommodate the difference.

<sup>13</sup> Bills submitted by members of the Lower House are called “Shu Ho” and those submitted by members of the Upper House are called “San Ho”.

<sup>14</sup> See Tamaru (2005) for further details about policy-making process.

Constitution or existing laws.<sup>15</sup> After the draft obtains approvals from all sections within the ministry, it progresses to the meeting of Administrative Vice Ministers (“Jimu Jikan Kaigi”). In this stage, final coordination among ministries is undertaken. Before going to the final process, the draft is sent for the preliminary review by the LDP. This process is important for LDP members, as will be described later. When the draft gains approval from the LDP, it becomes a party decision<sup>16</sup> (“Togi Kohsoku”). At last, the draft is discussed in the Cabinet meeting, but it is rare that a draft experiences significant changes in this stage. After the draft gains approval, the Cabinet submits it to the Diet as a government-sponsored bill.

Another option allows Diet members to prepare a bill by themselves (“Giin Rippo”).<sup>17</sup> In most case, opposition party members submit a bill and cross-party groups also submit a bill in this manner. In some case, LDP members submit this kind of bill. In this case, the bill has to pass the preliminary review by the LDP. There is a threshold,<sup>18</sup> which constrains the capacity of a Diet member to submit a bill to the Diet. Government-sponsored bills account for a large share of proposed legislation presented to the Diet.<sup>19</sup> Bills submitted by individual Diet members are few and most of them voted down.<sup>20</sup> Considered in this way, Diet members seemingly do not craft laws on their own. As suggested earlier, the Japanese bureaucracy has a strong impact over lawmaking. Indeed, Diet proceedings are sometimes considered as all but meaningless by some critics since the Diet approves most government-sponsored bills without amendment.<sup>21</sup>

However, this view has been significantly challenged.<sup>22</sup> Here it is necessary scrutinize in more detail the legislative process. After coming to power in 1955 the LDP got involved in the bill-making process. Even government-sponsored bills prepared by bureaucracies cannot be submitted without the LDP’s scrutiny at this stage of preparation. Studies have shown that the LDP has reviewed all government-sponsored bills before submitted to the Diet. This practice of preliminary review by the LDP was established in the 1960s.

In the first stage, government-sponsored bills are reviewed in “Bukai” (Policy Division) of “Seimu Chosa Kai” (Policy Research Council) in the LDP. “Seimu Chosa Kai” is the formal Party organization charged with the responsibility for research policy-making. “Bukai” are a subordinate agency of “Seimu Chosa Kai” assigned to specific policy areas such as Foreign Affairs, Finance, or Agriculture. The “Bukai” Divisions correspond to Diet committees.<sup>23</sup> “Bukai” adopt the practice of unanimous voting, so that every member is empowered with the option of vetoing a proposed bill, even

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<sup>15</sup> This examination is quite technical and focusing on legal aspect. See Nishikawa (2000), and Samuels (2004) for further details about Cabinet Legislation Bureau.

<sup>16</sup> Once a bill passes the review in the LDP, LDP members are not able to vote against that bill in the Diet. If one member cast against the bill, the party gives him or her a hard blow including exclusion from the party.

<sup>17</sup> To support Diet members to prepare bills, there are the Legislative Bureau House of Councilors and Legislative Bureau House of Representatives in the Diet. In addition to these organizations, each Diet member can employ one government-paid policy secretary (“Seisaku Hisho”).

<sup>18</sup> In the Lower House, more than 20 members are necessary to submit a bill and more than 10 members are necessary in the Upper House. To submit a bill which needs budget, more than 50 members in the Lower House and 20 members in the Upper House are needed.

<sup>19</sup> Government-sponsored bill accounts for about 70% of bills presented to the Diet after the World War 2 and 87.5% of government-sponsored bills have been passed from 1947 to 1999.

<sup>20</sup> From 1947 to 1999, only 36% of bills submitted by members of the House of the Representatives have been passed and 17.1% of bills submitted by members of the House of the Councilors have been passed. This is because opposition members submit most of these Diet members’ bills.

<sup>21</sup> See Mezey (1979).

<sup>22</sup> For example, Mike Mochizuki points out that Japanese Diet has not necessarily passed all of government-sponsored bills because of protests by opposite parties (Mochizuki 1982).

<sup>23</sup> “Bukai” is also corresponding to central government ministries.

if he or she is a newly elected member. Most “Bukai” members are specialists and often have a special interest in a particular policy area. Sometimes bills face opposition from some members, and are amended in “Bukai” according to members’ interests. At this point, the “Bukai” work as a veto point in the policy-making process. After passing review in the appropriate “Bukai”, bills are reviewed in “Seimu Chosa Kai Shingikai” (Policy Deliberation Commission), but at this stage discussion is quite formal and the Commission approves all bills without argument. Proposed legislation is then sent to “Somu Kai” (General Council). At this stage as well discussion is quite formal and it is rare that bills passed on for review by the “Bukai” are voted down. After getting an approval from “Somu Kai”, bills become the party decision. In other words, if bills cannot pass the review in “Bukai”, they are never got to the Diet, no matter how important to the government. Even if Prime Minister seeks some policy, Bukai’s veto can be exerted prior to Prime Minister’s wishes or leadership. In this way, the preliminary review process provides bottom-up and decentralized decision-making as each “Bukai” becomes a veto point in the policy-making process.

How do LDP members become “Zoku-giin”? All LDP members, except those who are appointed to a government post such as Minister or Vice-Minister, belong to at least one “Bukai”. One or two “Bukai” are automatically decided according to the Diet committee affiliation. For example, if a Party member belongs to the Diet Committee on Health, Welfare and Labour, he or she is automatically appointed to the Party’s Health, Welfare and Labour Division. LDP members can select up to two “Bukai” based on their preference, other than one or two “Bukai” decided on their Diet committee. The LDP leadership assigns newly elected members to Diet committees without considering their preference.<sup>24</sup> This means that newly elected members are assigned to unpopular Diet committee like Judicial Affairs, Environment, or Foreign Affairs. These policy areas are considered unpopular because they do not relate to ballots or money directly.<sup>25</sup> However, as mentioned above, all LDP members including newly elected members can belong to up to four “Bukai”, so they can select two “Bukai” according to their personal preference,<sup>26</sup> whereas newly elected members cannot select a Diet committee. Newly elected members belong to “Bukai” as the rank and file. They rise up the seniority ranks as they are reelected and acquire knowledge and experience in the particular policy area. Members of the “Bukai” must work hard attending study groups and serving the Party in a series of positions related to their area before considered as “Zoku-giin”.<sup>27</sup> As they ascend from the rank and file, they serve in several posts such as Deputy Director (“Fuku-Bukai Cho”) and Director (“Bukai Cho”) of the “Bukai”.<sup>28</sup> Other important career steps include the Director (“Riji”) and Chairperson (“Iin Cho”) of the related Diet committee.

According to a convention requiring unanimity in decision-making within “Bukai”, even if a newly elected member is against a bill, the bill will not pass “Bukai” review and is withdrawn. However, in general, a newly elected member cannot oppose the proposed legislation individually. If only one member in the “Bukai” exercises the veto again and again, the party leadership may impose sanctions, and other “Bukai” members will try to remove the dissident from the “Bukai”. Usually, the Director and Deputy Director play a major role in decision-making at “Bukai.” Party leadership can select the Director and Deputy Director. In this selection, the time of reelection, the experience in that policy area, and the balance among “Habatsu” are heavily considered. As a result, the experienced and

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<sup>24</sup> See Murakawa (2000), and Tatebayashi (2004: pp.68).

<sup>25</sup> See Tatebayashi (2004).

<sup>26</sup> To belong to a popular “Bukai” is something difficult for a backbencher (see Tatebayashi 2004).

<sup>27</sup> See Schoppa (1991).

<sup>28</sup> The Deputy Director and Director of “Bukai” are decided according to “Habatsu” allocation (Sato and Matsuzaki 1986). However, the experience in that policy area is essential to obtain such position (Tatebayashi 2004).

senior members are selected as the Director and Deputy Director.<sup>29</sup> The Diet committee Chairperson and Director are selected according to the same rule of “Bukai”. “Zoku-giin” is a member who has been reelected several times and held several posts in both “Bukai” and Diet committee. This is why “Zoku-giin” are able to exercise strong influence in policy-making process.

Considered comparatively, politicians who have deep and long-lasting interests in specific policy areas are not unique to Japanese politics. As David Mayhew reminds us, most politicians seek reelection (Mayhew 1974). To be reelected, they must gather support from voters. In seeking such support, politicians engage in three major political activities; position taking, credit claiming and self-advertising. First, politicians present to voters their positions toward a political issue. Second, they claim credit for government policies by assuring that benefits such as financial transfers reach their constituents. Third, politicians work hard to advertise their names in their own electoral districts. The committee system in the U.S. Congress serves these purposes well by enabling politicians to engage in these crucial activities associated with electoral success. And this committee centered legislative system makes the decision-making process in the U.S. Congress quite decentralized.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, politicians in the U.S. Congress belong to specific committee for a long time becoming specialists in that policy area. This opportunity structure is similar to what is provided to “Zoku-giin” in Japan. The Japanese Diet is committee centered Diet system like the US congress, and moreover, the LDP’s policy-making system is quite decentralized similar to the U.S. congress.

In Japan, politicians are keenly concerned about reelection.<sup>31</sup> They also try to appeal to voters by following the three strategies suggested by Mayhew. But in this case it leads them to be “Zoku-giin.” They claim to be specialists in certain policy areas and work hard to gather support from voters and money from organizations related to that policy area. To gather as much support as possible, “Zoku-giin” are concentrated in three policy areas; Agriculture, Construction and Industry.<sup>32</sup> While these three policy areas are closely related to votes and money there are policy areas that are less promising because they are seen to have less relation to votes and money; Cabinet, Judicial Affairs, Foreign Affairs, and Environment.<sup>33</sup> However, it is said that recent reforms in Japan have changed these Zoku-giin’s behavior.<sup>34</sup> In the next chapter, I will describe reforms in Japan and their consequences to Zoku-giin’s behavior.

### **3. Prime Minister Koizumi --- Strengthened Prime Minister’s leadership**

As mentioned in Chapter 2, in a decentralized LDP policy-making process “Zoku-giin” were able to significantly influence major policy decisions. However, by all accounts Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi has dramatically restructured this decentralized Party policy-making process to enable him to exercise stronger personal leadership. Two institutional changes adopted in the 1990s were crucial for Prime Minister Koizumi to exercise his leadership. One is electoral reform of the House of Representative enacted in 1994. The second is wide-ranging governmental organization and reform enacted in 1999.<sup>35</sup> In this chapter I review these changes and describe how Koizumi took advantages of them in order to enhance the institutional position of the prime minister.

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<sup>29</sup> See Tatebayashi (2004).

<sup>30</sup> See Mayhew (1974).

<sup>31</sup> See Ramseyer and Rosenbluth (1993), and Tatebayashi (2004).

<sup>32</sup> See Inoguchi and Iwai (1987).

<sup>33</sup> See Sato and Matsuzaki (1986), Inoguchi and Iwai (1987), Iwai (1989), and Tatebayashi (2004).

<sup>34</sup> See Tatebayashi (2004).

<sup>35</sup> See Mabuchi (2004), Tatebayashi (2004), and Machidori (2005).

The 1990s is sometimes considered as the “Lost Decade” in Japan because the country suffered a long economic recession after collapse of the economic bubble boom. As a result of increasing public expenditure on economic pump-priming measures, Japanese government faced a massive financial deficit of over seven hundred trillion Yen (nearly equal to seven trillion Canadian Dollars). As represented by the fiscal deficit, many negative aspects of Japanese government were revealed in the 1990s. Many critics argued that in order to set the nation on a course of recovery it was necessary to reconstruct Japanese government. As Susan Pharr puts it: “The basic pattern in Japan has been relatively low levels of confidence in government... with distrust reaching near record levels in the 1990s” (Pharr 2000: pp.174).<sup>36</sup> Consequently, since the 1990s Japan has experienced significant reforms in several areas that include: organization of national government, center-local government relations, finance, social welfare and so on,<sup>37</sup> even in the face of strong resistance from entrenched political and bureaucratic interests.<sup>38</sup>

It was in this economic and political context that the coalition government carried out a significant institutional change of the electoral system in 1994.<sup>39</sup> The former electoral system of the House of Representative was a single, non-transferable vote (SNTV) system<sup>40</sup> with a multi-member district (MMD) arrangement. There were normally three to five seats in one district in the SNTV/MMD system. A ruling party (like the LDP) had to nominate two or more candidates in the same district in order to win a majority of seats in the parliament. A candidate, especially an LDP-backed candidate, needed to emphasize not only their party but also their own name to gather support from voters because there was at least one other competitor running under the same party label in the district.<sup>41</sup> To win this intraparty competition, candidates of the LDP followed several strategies. First, they created private support networks in their electoral district.<sup>42</sup> Candidates rely heavily on this support group for getting out the vote. Second, they have to distinguish themselves from their intraparty competitors. As Masahiko Tatebayashi and Margaret McKean described, LDP members followed one of two strategies in dividing the vote in their district: either geographical division or division by socioeconomic sector. Their choice of vote division strategy then determined the pattern of their legislative activities (Tatebayashi and McKean 2002, Tatebayashi 2004).

However, in 1994, a new electoral system was introduced which contains both single member district (SMD) and proportional representation (PR) seats.<sup>43</sup> Both the SMD and PR system are seen to promote party voting when compared to the SNTV/MMD. Under the SMD system there is one candidate from one party in one district, so voters can distinguish candidates by their party name. In PR elections, voters cast their votes by making a choice of party. Therefore, 1994 electoral reform in Japan

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<sup>36</sup> Ezra Suleiman also points out: “distrust in government in Japan has been high and by most measures growing during the last two decades”(Suleiman 2003: pp.78-79).

<sup>37</sup> Concerning reforms in each area, see Campbell (1999), Toya (2003), and Peng (2004). See also Hiwatari et al. (2002), Tokyo Daigaku Shakai Kagaku Kenkyusho (ed.) (2006).

<sup>38</sup> Some scholars claim that reforms have been hampered by high barriers erected by vested interests, and it is necessary to implement further reforms. See Yamaguchi (1997).

<sup>39</sup> There are many studies, which argue the influence of electoral reforms in Japan. Most of them tackle on the influence of electoral reform on political party, party system, and policy change. Gary W. Cox, Frances McCall Rosenbluth and Michael F. Thies argue that the reform has an influence on the faction in the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) (Cox, Rosenbluth and Thies 1999). Margaret McKean and Ethan Scheiner discuss whether Japan’s new electoral system reorganizes the party system in Japan (McKean and Scheiner 2000).

<sup>40</sup> Columbia takes a SNTV electoral system. See Shugart (2001) for further details about electoral system.

<sup>41</sup> SNTV/MMD system is considered to encourage personal voting. Some works empirically analyze personal voting under the SNTV/MMD system. See Miyake (1989) and Watanuki and Miyake (1996). See also Cain et al. (1987), Ramseyer and Rosenbluth (1993), McCubbins and Rosenbluth (1995), Reed and Thies (2001), and Shugart (2001).

<sup>42</sup> See Curtis (1971).

<sup>43</sup> 300 seats are elected from single-member district and 180 are elected in PR system.

resulted in promoting party voting.<sup>44</sup> For candidates, they do not need to appeal to voters by using their name anymore.<sup>45</sup> In the SNTV system, candidates can be elected if they get between 20-30% votes, because normally there are three to five seats in one district, and it is a useful strategy to appeal to specific policy area groups. This is one reason why members in the LDP try to be a specialist in specific policy area. However, in the SMD and PR system, candidates cannot win the election by appealing to specific interest groups in SMD system since they have to win more than 50% of the votes. This change influences each LDP member's selection of Bukai and the Diet committees. If they cannot gather enough votes to be elected by being a specialist in one policy area, they may try to be a generalist. This would cause the reduction in the number of "Zoku-giin" as they are specialists in specific policy area.

In addition, as Tatebayashi suggests, the party leadership has been strengthened as a result of electoral reform.<sup>46</sup> In the SMD/PR district system, the party's nomination is essential for candidates to be elected, while in the SNTV/MMD system, a few candidates can win the election without the party's nomination.<sup>47</sup> For example, Prime Minister Koizumi, the President of LDP, did not nominate candidates who were against his post office reform ideas in the 2005 general election and most of candidates without the party nomination were not elected.

The second institutional change in 1990s was governmental reform carried out in the Hashimoto Administration. This reform included reorganization of central government<sup>48</sup> and strengthening of Cabinet functions. A Cabinet Office was established to support the Prime Minister's policy-making. One of the most important organizations within the Cabinet Office is the Council on Economic and Fiscal Policy ("Keizai Zaisei Shimon Kaigi"). This Council is in charge of discussing and creating the general government budget, which had been an exclusive prerogative of the Ministry of Finance. Under the Koizumi Administration, the Council on Economic and Fiscal Policy begins to set the frame of budget and the Ministry of Finance is no longer able to decide freely the contents of budget. This top-down budget process reinforces the importance of Cabinet Office's in coordinating policies among ministries and this reinforces Prime Minister's leadership.

It is the Koizumi Administration that converted these institutional changes into a basic shift in the policy-making process.<sup>49</sup> First, he did not accept Habatsu's recommendations when appointing Cabinet ministers. This is quite an unusual step in established LDP practices, but he was able to do so because he received strong support from the public. The Koizumi Government's approval rating soon after inauguration set new record high of over 80% in newspaper surveys conducted in 2001.<sup>50</sup> Prime Minister is now able to appoint several ministers who are in charge of specific policy areas in the Cabinet Office as a result of the Hashimoto reforms. Koizumi utilizes this political appointment and he has appointed several ministers like Heizo Takenaka who was the professor of Economics at Keio University. In Koizumi Administration, such political appointees play a significant role in carrying out several reforms.

These top-down policy-making changes have influenced "Zoku-giin" in the LDP because Prime Minister Koizumi sometimes skips the preliminary review process by the LDP. One example of this occurred when the prime minister carried out a post office privatization without sending the bill to the

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<sup>44</sup> See Yamaguchi (1993), Kohno (1997), Reed and Thies (2001), Reed (2003), and Kabashima (2004).

<sup>45</sup> See Tatebayashi (2004).

<sup>46</sup> See Tatebayashi (2004: pp.195-203).

<sup>47</sup> After the electoral reform, party leadership sometimes uses this kind of threat. For example, in 2000 under the Mori Administration, the party leadership threatened party members who were against party decision that party would cancel their nomination to the election.

<sup>48</sup> The number of central government ministries was decreased from 22 to 13.

<sup>49</sup> See Machidori (2005: pp.180)

<sup>50</sup> For example, Yomiuri Shimbun, April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2001, Morning Edition.



LDP for review. Because the post office is one of the major supporting groups for the LDP,<sup>51</sup> many LDP members including “Zoku-giin” in postal affairs (“Yusei Zoku”),<sup>52</sup> were opposed to post office privatization. Koizumi did not want his reform legislation amended by forces resistant to reform so he instructed government officials to submit the post office “revitalization” bill to the Diet without the preliminary review by the LDP. The bill was submitted to the Diet in 2005 without “Togi Kohsoku” (party decision), but this short cut in policy-making routines caused many LDP members to revolt against the bill. The bill was discussed in the Lower House first and passed by a narrow margin on July 5<sup>th</sup>, 2005. Thirty-seven LDP members cast a ballot against the bill and 14 LDP members skipped the vote in the Lower House.<sup>53</sup> After passed in the Lower House, the bill was sent to the Upper House where the bill was voted upon on August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2005. The bill was rejected in the Upper House, because 22 LDP members voted against the bill and 8 members skipped the vote.<sup>54</sup> Prime Minister Koizumi then dissolved the Lower House to seek the judgment of voters. In the general election of the Lower House, Koizumi decided not to renominate Party members who were against the postal bill. In addition, Koizumi nominated opposing candidates in the same district of the LDP opponents of the post office bill. In the general election, the LDP won outright victory. The LDP now occupies more than 2/3 of the Lower House seats. Most opponents to the bill did not win a seat in the election<sup>55</sup> and so there are over 80 newly elected members in the LDP.

As shown in the case of post office privatization, Koizumi has carried out several reforms, which are against the interest of many LDP members. These include post-office privatization, trinity reform,<sup>56</sup> and privatization of the Japan Highway Corporation. He sometimes skips the preliminary review of bills by the LDP, which as we have argued is the most important resource for “Zoku-giin”. In addition, he excludes from consultations members in the LDP who are against reform. As a result, there should be significant changes in the structure of “Zoku-giin”. In the following section, I will show how “Zoku-giin” in the LDP have changed their political behavior as a consequence of 5 years of the Koizumi Administration.

#### 4. Data and Variables

In the following part I discuss how best to identify “Zoku-giin.” First, I deal with LDP members who were members of the House of Representatives or the House of Councilors as of June 11, 2006 just before the end of the Koizumi Administration. On that date, there were 295 LDP members in the House of Representatives and 112 LDP members in the House of Councilors.<sup>57</sup> To follow the political career of each LDP member, I have created a new data set<sup>58</sup> based on information contained in “*Kokkai*

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<sup>51</sup> There are more than one million votes from postal office participants (Nihon Keizai Shinbun: January 18, 2002).

<sup>52</sup> “Yusei Zoku” belongs to “Internal Affairs and Communication” division in the LDP.

<sup>53</sup> Yomiuri Shimbun, July 6<sup>th</sup> 2005.

<sup>54</sup> Yomiuri Shimbun, August 9<sup>th</sup> 2005.

<sup>55</sup> All opponents to the bill had to leave from the LDP.

<sup>56</sup> Koizumi Administration called the reform of financial transfer from central to local governments “Sanmi Ittai no Kaikaku” (Trinity reform) because the reform included three reform packages (Cut in Local Allocation Tax, Cut in subsidies from central government to local governments, and Transfer of financial resource from central to local governments). See Kitamura (2005) for further details about the “Trinity reform” and Koizumi’s leadership.

<sup>57</sup> The membership of the House of Representatives is 480. The House of Councilors membership is 252. I exclude Yohei Kohno and Chikage Ohgi from analysis because they have been independent from LDP after they were elected as the Speaker of the Lower House and Upper House in Japan.

<sup>58</sup> I created the basic data set with Naofumi Fujimura, Kenichi Joshita and Issei Kojima. I have recoded this data set for the purpose of this analysis.

*Binran*” from the period 1975 to 2005.<sup>59</sup> I also use the data provided by Sato and Matsuzaki (1986) and Inoguchi and Iwai (1987) to supplement “*Kokkai Binran*”. In addition, I make use of the LDP website, the House of Representatives website and the House of Councilors website to update information.<sup>60</sup> This newly created data set includes all the incumbent LDP Diet member whose past careers have included holding the position of Deputy Director (“Fuku-Bukai Cho”) and Director (“Bukai Cho”) of the “Bukai”, and the Director (“Riji”) and Chairperson (“In Cho”) of a Diet committee.<sup>61</sup>

How to specify “Zoku-giin” is a difficult issue. Inoguchi and Iwai (1987) set two conditions. First, they adopt the “Zoku-giin” list compiled by weekly magazines.<sup>62</sup> However, this list is decided by the subjective judgments of journalists and so some more “objective” criteria is necessary. Therefore, the authors included the list made by Sato and Matsuzaki because it took into account the career path of each LDP member. To specify by more objective criteria, I identified an LDP member as a “Zoku-giin” if he or she met the following conditions, based on Sato and Matsuzaki’s definition (Sato and Matsuzaki 1986). First, did the politician serve as either Director of the “Bukai” or Chairperson of the Diet committee in a specific policy area? If the politician served in both positions, I considered the politician as a “Zoku-giin” without referring to the second condition. My assumption is that serving in these two positions indicates that the politician is recognized as an important member in that policy area. Second, I determine if the politician served as both Deputy Director of “Bukai” and Director of the Diet committee or had served as either Director of the “Bukai” or Chairperson of the Diet committee.

Since the studies authored by Sato and Matsuzaki (1986), Inoguchi and Iwai (1987), and Iwai (1989) appeared in the 1980s, there have been no academic studies which focus directly on “Zoku-giin”.<sup>63</sup> In this paper, I will provide information about “Zoku-giin” in the LDP after Koizumi’s dissolution of the House of Representatives in 2005 and examine how it affects on the LDP members.

## 5. Analysis

Table 1<sup>64</sup> shows the number of terms in office of LDP members of the House of Representatives and Table 2 shows the same information for the House of Councilors.<sup>65</sup> The most striking characteristic of the House of Representatives is that newly elected members accounted for largest share in the LDP. This is because Prime Minister Koizumi did not nominate those who were

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<sup>59</sup> “*Kokkai Binran*” is usually published twice a year in February and August. In addition, an extra edition is published just after the general election.

<sup>60</sup> I downloaded them on May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2006. The LDP Homepage: <http://www.jimin.jp/jimin/yakuin/yakuin-3.html>. The House of Representatives: [http://www.shugiin.go.jp/index.nsf/html/index\\_honkai.htm](http://www.shugiin.go.jp/index.nsf/html/index_honkai.htm). The House of Councilors: [http://www.sangiin.go.jp/japanese/frameset/fset\\_b01\\_01.htm](http://www.sangiin.go.jp/japanese/frameset/fset_b01_01.htm).

<sup>61</sup> The Diet committee and Bukai were reorganized according to the reorganization of governmental ministries in 2000 and the number of Bukai was reduced from 17 to 13. Because this reorganization brought the reduction of posts in Bukai, new posts were established in Bukai. One is Sennin Bukai Cho (Special Director) and another is Bukai Cho Dairi (Acting Director). I regard Sennin Bukai Cho as equivalent to Bukai Cho and Bukai Cho Dairi as Fuku Bukai Cho based on Tatebayashi’s argument (Tatebayashi 2004).

<sup>62</sup> “Shukan Yomiuri” June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1985. “Shukan Daiyamondo” December 21<sup>st</sup>, 1985 – March 15<sup>th</sup>, 1986.

<sup>63</sup> Some studies deal with Zoku-giin in the LDP after the electoral reform in 1994. See Krauss and Pekkanen (2004), Tatebayashi (2004), and Pekkanen, Nyblade and Krauss (2006).

<sup>64</sup> I made all tables used in this paper based on newly created data set.

<sup>65</sup> The term of the House of Councilors is 6 years and half seats are reelected every three years, so I divide one term into two periods; the previous period and the later period. The previous period is indicated as -.0, and the later period is described as -.5 in the table. I depend on Naofumi Fujimura’s MA Thesis for this idea (Fujimura Unpublished).

against the post office privatization bill at the general election in 2005 as described in the section 3. Another reason is that the LDP won an outright victory in the 2005 general election of the House of Representatives. As a result of the great victory, fresh candidates were able to win seats in the PR district. As mentioned in Chapter 2, newly elected members cannot be “Zoku-giin” in their first term, so the number of “Zoku-giin” would be smaller than that in the 1980s. Secondly, those who have experienced only SMD/PR district system accounts for around 65% in the House of Representatives.

**Table 1 The Number of Terms (House of Representatives)  
June 2006**

		Frequency	Percent
Term	1	83	28.1
	2	33	11.2
	3	41	13.9
	4	40	13.6
	5	21	7.1
	6	22	7.5
	7	15	5.1
	8	14	4.7
	9	15	5.1
	10	2	.7
	11	2	.7
	12	5	1.7
	13	1	.3
	14	0	.0
	15	0	.0
	16	1	.3
Total		295	100.0

Source: Data created from *Kokkai Binran*.

**Table 2 The Number of Terms (House of Councilors)  
June 2006**

		Frequency	Percent
Term	1.0	19	17.0
	1.5	20	17.9
	2.0	17	15.2
	2.5	24	21.4
	3.0	7	6.3
	3.5	9	8.0
	4.0	4	3.6
	4.5	6	5.4
	5.0	4	3.6
	7.5	1	.9
	10.0	1	.9
Total		112	100.0

Source: Data created from *Kokkai Binran*.

The fourth term LDP members in the House of Representatives were first elected in the 1996 general election, so those are in their third term or less have experienced only the SMD/PR system. This would affect LDP members’ selection of their specialization in specific policy area. As a Prime Minister cannot dissolve the House of Councilors, the members of the House of Councilors usually finish their six year term. To the contrary, the members of the House of Representatives usually do not finish their term because of the resolution by a Prime Minister. The term of the House of Representatives is about three years, on average, since World War II. The half term of the House of Councilors can be equivalent to one term of the House of Representatives virtually. Therefore, I divide the term of the House of Councilors into two periods to distinguish the previous period from the later period. For example, the later period of first term of the House of Councilors can be equivalent to the second term of the House of Councilors in terms of the job tenure.

Table 3 shows the number of term of each Deputy Director (“Fuku-Bukai Cho”), Director (“Bukai Cho”) of the “Bukai”, and the Director (“Riji”) or Chairperson (“Iin Cho”) of the Diet committee.<sup>66</sup> Newly elected members are unable to obtain posts in “Bukai” nor the Diet committee except for “Riji” in the House of Councilors. Members of the House of Representatives gain a post in “Bukai” and the Diet committee as “Riji” or “Fuku Bukai Cho” in their second- third term.

<sup>66</sup> See Tatebayashi (2004: pp.187) for the comparison between the pre- and post- electoral reform.

**Table 3 The Number of Term and Posts in Bukai and the Diet committee (June 2006)**

Lower House Term	In cho	Bukai Cho	Riji	Fuku Bukai Cho	Upper House Term	In cho	Bukai Cho	Riji	Fuku Bukai Cho
<b>1</b>	0	0	0	0	<b>1</b>	0	0	4	0
<b>2</b>	0	6	17	46	<b>1.5</b>	1	0	7	17
<b>3</b>	0	10	19	16	<b>2</b>	2	3	6	8
<b>4</b>	1	3	16	2	<b>2.5</b>	3	2	8	12
<b>5</b>	7	0	3	0	<b>3</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>6</b>	2	0	1	0	<b>3.5</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>7</b>	0	0	1	0	<b>4</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>8</b>	0	0	1	0	<b>4.5</b>	0	0	0	0

Source: Data created from *Kokkai Binran*.

Members of the House of Councilors take a position as “Riji” or “Fuku Bukai Cho” from the latter period of first term to the latter period of second term. This indicates that LDP members’ specialization as “Zoku-giin” can be decided in these terms. In addition, most of the House of Representatives members gain a position as “In Cho” or “Bukai Cho” by their fifth term. In a similar fashion, the House of Councilors members gain a post as “In Cho” or “Bukai Cho” by the end of second term. These conditions imply that the career path as “Zoku-giin” is completed by fourth term in the case of the House of Representative members and by the end of second term in the case of the members of the House of Councilors. In terms of a career path towards become a “Zoku-giin”, there seems to be little difference between both Houses.

What about current “Zoku-giin” in the LDP? Table 4 shows the number of terms and the number of “Zoku-giin”. As shown in the table, LDP members can be considered as “Zoku-giin” in their fifth term (the House of Representatives) or the latter period of second term (the House of Councilors). The House of Councilor members seem to become “Zoku-giin” a little earlier than the member of House of Representatives. One reason of this would be that the House of Councilors member was serving a second term whereas members of the House of Representatives members have been reelected three times. Members of the House of Councilors do not need to spend a great deal of time preparing for elections and so can spend much energy promoting their specialty in certain policy areas than members of the House of Representatives. However, the share of “Zoku-giin” in the LDP is similar in both Houses at around 30%. Next let us look at the policy areas selected by “Zoku-giin”. According to Tatebayashi, “Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries”, “Land, Infrastructure and Transport”, “Internal Affairs and Communications”, and “Health, Labour and Welfare” are popular Bukai in the LDP. By contrast, “Cabinet”, “Judicial Affairs”, “Foreign Affairs” and “Environment” are unpopular among the LDP members (Tatebayashi 2004: pp.188). In addition, “Education” and “Security” had “Zoku-giin” in the 1980s (Sato and Matsuzaki 1986; Inoguchi and Iwai 1987).

**Table 4 Zoku-giin in the LDP (June 2006)**

<b>Lower House / Term</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10 -</b>	<b>Total</b>
Cabinet	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Internal Affairs and Communications	0	0	0	1	2	1	1	1	1	0	7
Security	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	5
Judicial Affairs	0	0	0	1	1	2	1	0	0	0	5
Foreign Affairs	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	5
Financial Affairs	0	0	1	0	1	1	2	3	0	1	9
Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology	0	0	0	0	3	2	1	1	3	2	12
Health, Labour and Welfare	0	0	0	1	1	3	1	1	0	3	10
Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries	0	0	0	1	1	4	1	2	1	1	11
Economy, Trade and Industry	0	0	1	1	2	1	1	2	1	1	10
Land, Infrastructure and Transport	0	0	0	2	2	4	1	1	4	0	14
Environment	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	3
<b>Sub Total</b>	0	0	3	9	16	21	10	14	11	8	92
Percentage of Zoku-giin (%)	0	0	7.3	22.5	76.2	95.5	66.7	100	73.3	72.7	31.2
<b>Upper House / Term</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5.5 -</b>	
Cabinet	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Internal Affairs and Communications	0	0	0	3	0	1	0	1	0	0	5
Security	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Judicial Affairs	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Foreign Affairs	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Financial Affairs	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology	0	0	0	2	1	2	0	0	0	0	5
Health, Labour and Welfare	0	0	0	3	1	2	0	0	0	0	6
Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries	0	0	1	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	5
Economy, Trade and Industry	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	5
Land, Infrastructure and Transport	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	4
Environment	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
<b>Sub Total</b>	0	1	5	13	4	5	3	3	0	2	36
Percentage of Zoku-giin (%)	0	5	29.4	54.2	57.1	55.6	75	50	0	100	32.1
<b>Total</b>	0	0	8	22	20	26	13	17	11	10	128

Source: Data created from *Kokkai Binran*.

First, “Cabinet” and “Environment” remain unpopular “Zoku” positions among LDP members. There are only two “Zoku-giin” in “Cabinet” and four in “Environment”. These policy areas do not relate to votes in election or political funds, as there are no influential interest groups in these policy areas.<sup>67</sup> “Judicial Affairs” and “Foreign Affairs” are not quite as unpopular as “Cabinet” and “Environment”. “Financial Affairs” is almost at the same level as these two policy areas. Other six policy areas are still popular among the LDP members. Especially, “Education” and “Land, Infrastructure and Transport” are the most popular “Zoku-giin” policy area.

Judging from this data, it seems that there has been little change from the 1980s. However, some additional considerations are required. First, we have to recognize that reorganization of central ministries had a significant impact on “Land, Infrastructure and Transport”. Before the reorganization, there were two large ministries in this policy area; Ministry of Construction and Ministry of Transport. Both ministries had influential “Zoku-giin” in the past<sup>68</sup>. However, if I divide the number of “Zoku-giin” in “Land, Infrastructure and Transport” into two, the number of “Zoku-giin” in each policy is nine. This is almost as many as “Foreign Affairs” or “Financial Affairs”. Moreover, “Zoku-giin” in “Land, Infrastructure and Transport” tend to be senior, especially in the House of Councilors, two of the most senior members are both “Zoku-giin” in this policy area.

Next, I will look at “Internal Affairs and Communications” to examine the impact of Koizumi’s privatization of post office. Compared with other policy areas, “Internal Affairs and Communications” can be regarded as popular policy area as there are 12 “Zoku-giin”. However, if we look only at the House of Representatives, there are seven “Zoku-giin” a figure smaller than other popular policy areas. On the other hand, in the House of Councilors there are five “Zoku-giin” in this area and this is one of the most popular policy areas. Prime Minister Koizumi was politically unable to exclude those who were against the post office privatization bill in the House of Councilors because a Prime Minister cannot dissolve the House of Councilors, while he could exclude opponents to the post office privatization in the House of Representatives by not nominating them at the general election after dissolution, and he did just that. Because of Koizumi’s exclusion, most “Zoku-giin” in “Internal Affairs and Communications” lost their seats. As a result, “Zoku-giin” in “Internal Affairs and Communications” become a smaller group compared to other popular policy areas.

## 6. Conclusion

In this paper, I have argued how policy-making process in Japan has changed since the 1990s, focusing on the contemporary political place of “Zoku-giin” in policy-making. I have shown that under the Koizumi Administration, the “Zoku-giin” in the LDP have changed gradually.

First, we can recognize that the number of “Zoku-giin” in certain policy like “Land, Infrastructure and Transport” have decreased compared with the 1980s when they exercised strong influence in policy-making process. In addition, the “Zoku-giin” in postal policy seem to have suffered a significant damage by Koizumi’s post office privatization. A number of newly elected members of the House of Representatives in the LDP will bring changes in the future because they obtained seats by supporting Koizumi’s reform. On the condition that the public supports reforms, newly elected members and most members in the LDP will support reforms.

Two institutional settings reinforce Prime Minister’s strong leadership. The reformed electoral system of the House of Representatives and strengthened Cabinet power by the reform in the 1990s

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<sup>67</sup> Tatebayashi suggests that the number of LDP members, who belong to these Bukai, has been increasing since the 2000s (Tatebayashi 2004). This implies that these policy areas will have “Zoku-giin” in the future.

<sup>68</sup> See Inoguchi and Iwai (1987).

will help a Prime Minister exercise his own leadership in policy-making. It depends on each Prime Minister to exercise leadership, but now, a Prime Minister can exercise stronger leadership in policy-making than before.

This paper provides new information for understanding contemporary Japanese politics base on newly created data set. Since some works in the 1980s, there have been no academic studies which focus directly on “Zoku-giin.” This paper provides important information that serves as a basis for further steps. I will advance to compare post Koizumi and pre Koizumi with using same data set to clarify Koizumi’s impact in the LDP in the future to see the time series change of the “Zoku-giin.”

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