

## CHAPTER 2

# Nukaga Fukushima: Climbing the Ladder to Influence

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THE END OF the prolonged era of continuous rule by the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in the summer of 1993 and the passage of a political reform package bill under the non-LDP coalition-based Hosokawa cabinet in early 1994 had pervasive impact on Japanese electoral politics. The electoral changes in the House of Representatives (Lower House), especially the introduction of a single-seat district system combined with proportional representation, significantly affected political conditions in local constituencies and the status of politicians at the local level. Extensive study needs to be done to fully understand the impact of these changes, and this is one such study.

As discussed in other chapters, LDP candidates were very competitive in developing their own personal networks under the old multiseat district system. Because the LDP fielded more than one candidate in each of the old districts, candidates had to run against not only opponents from other parties but also rivals from within the LDP. The old system encouraged LDP candidates to organize various political actors, including local politicians, local interest groups, and community organizations, into networks. The core of these networks was the *koenkai*, or a candidate's personal support organization.

With the introduction of the new election system, the 130 multiseat districts of 511 members of the Lower House were rearranged into

300 single-seat districts and eleven 200-member proportional representation blocks. After the passage of the political reform bill in early 1994, LDP incumbents in the Lower House restructured their *koenkai* based on the new district unit. In other words, each LDP candidate was faced with reorganizing the *koenkai* of former LDP rivals in his or her own district.

This chapter focuses on the election of Nukaga Fukushima, the LDP's Lower House incumbent candidate in the new Ibaraki Second District. The LDP has consistently maintained a strong base in Ibaraki Prefecture. Even in the 1993 Lower House election when the LDP lost its majority in the legislative body, the party retained eight of its twelve Lower House seats from Ibaraki. The new Ibaraki Second District also represents a typical traditional conservative rural area in Japan. By analyzing Nukaga's strategy under the new election system, we can evaluate the impact of the electoral changes in rural districts.

First, we will describe how Nukaga formed and developed his *koenkai* under the old system. Second, we will analyze how he reorganized LDP supporters in his district. The old Ibaraki First District was divided into three new districts: the Ibaraki First District, spanning the northern and western part of the old First District, including the prefectural capital, Mito; the Ibaraki Second District, comprising the eastern part of the old First District; and the Ibaraki Third District, encompassing the southern part of the old First District, which consisted of bedroom suburbs of Tokyo. It was in the Second District that Nukaga succeeded in winning the LDP nomination. Generally speaking, Nukaga benefited by the new election system, because in the past four elections under the old system since 1983, he was very strong in the area that formed the new Ibaraki Second District.

Through this analysis, we will also consider the characteristics of Nukaga's new *koenkai* unit: whether the *koenkai* transformed into a party-based organization, as had been expected during the deliberations on electoral reform in the Diet, or whether it survived as the candidate's personal support group. We will conclude that Nukaga succeeded in maintaining his *koenkai* even through the electoral reform. It may be the dilemma of political reform that the new single-seat system could on the one hand encourage party-based competition and on the other hand promote the formation of conservative "pocket districts" where a popular Lower House member can establish his own *koenkai* unit.

For this chapter, I draw mainly on newspaper reports, interviews with Nukaga and members of his staff and his koenkai since 1991, and on-site research conducted in his district September 26–27 and October 10–14, 1996.<sup>1</sup>

## PAST ELECTIONS AND THE NUKAGA KOENKAI

A liberal democrat, Nukaga has been a member of the Lower House for fifteen years, as voters have returned him to his seat five straight times since 1983. Born in 1942 in Aso, Ibaraki Prefecture, he graduated from a prestigious private university, Waseda. His first job was as a newspaper reporter for the *Sankei Shimbun*. After leaving the *Sankei*, he contested and won a seat in the Ibaraki Prefectural Assembly in 1978 and remained an assembly member until 1983. He saw an opportunity to play a role in national politics when Hashimoto Tomisaburo, then a powerful member of the Lower House representing Ibaraki Prefecture's First District, decided not to contest the 1983 election and threw his support behind Nukaga as his successor.

Nukaga is now known as a close associate of Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryutaro. After the 1996 Lower House general election, he served as chairman of the Finance Committee, a post that is generally considered a stepping stone to eventual ministerial appointment (Sato and Matsuzaki 1986). Following Hashimoto's reshuffling of the cabinet in September 1997, Nukaga was appointed deputy chief cabinet secretary.

As a member of the Ibaraki Prefectural Assembly, Nukaga's electoral district was the county of Namekata, which consists of the four towns of Aso, Ushibori, Itako, and Tamatsukuri and the village of Kitaura. Nukaga began by organizing support among his family and relatives. They were his primary resource for money and administrative assistance. He then sought support from personal friends and the friends of relatives. Nukaga himself did not have many friends in his constituency because he had lived in Tokyo since graduating from junior high school. His relatives, however, had an extensive network of contacts in the district.

After establishing this support base, he visited locally popular and powerful political activists and organization leaders to seek their favor and support. His basic strategy was to first organize a strong base with

a network of loyal supporters in his native town. After that, he targeted the neighboring towns and villages through his own network of supporters and sought expanded support and help, in turn, from their relatives, friends, and colleagues. This is the quite ordinary approach to winning votes in rural electoral districts in Japan, and Nukaga adopted this process with energy. As a consequence, he has twenty *koenkai* in Aso and they have served him well in gathering votes in the town thus far.

A distinctive feature of Nukaga's *koenkai*, however, was that nonpoliticians played a crucial role. Nukaga himself says that one of his basic policies in organizing *koenkai* is appointment of nonpolitician members to key posts in the organization.<sup>2</sup> Politicians have their own elections in mind and in many cases their priority is their own reelection. Nukaga naturally preferred to put his trust in persons committed primarily to his election. The head of his *koenkai* in the village of Ono told me, "There are no politicians in executive posts in our organization. This makes the organization stronger. Local politicians tend to attach more importance to their own election than to national elections."<sup>3</sup>

Nukaga made no basic change in his approach to campaigning when he ran in national elections. When he ran for election to the Lower House for the first time in 1983 as the successor to Hashimoto Tomisaburo, he campaigned chiefly in Kashima and Namekata counties. In the other areas, it was mainly Hashimoto and his staff who campaigned on Nukaga's behalf. At that time, Nukaga was not well known except in the Kashima-Namekata (Rokko) area. He gained about 54,000 votes in the Rokko area, a count that exceeded those cast for Hashimoto in 1980 by more than 15,000 (see table 1).

After this first victory, Nukaga steadily expanded his support base. In the city of Mito, for example, where he had garnered only 4,530 votes in the 1983 election, he has consistently received more than 12,000 votes since the 1986 election, when the strength of his Mito *koenkai* was first recognized by other candidates' camps (*Ibaraki* 1990, 1). In other areas, too, he consolidated his support base.

Notably, Nukaga organizes his *koenkai* differently from one locality to another. *Koenkai* in rural areas tend to be community based and those in urban areas tend to be both community- and business-sector-oriented. On his home ground of Aso, the *koenkai* unit of organization corresponds to the former village unit (as prior to the

Table 1. Votes for Hashimoto and Nukaga

Year	Hashimoto	Nukaga			
	1980	1983	1986	1990	1993
City					
Mito	7,404	4,530	12,706	12,808	15,487
Ryugasaki	714	340	544	666	632
Kasama	1,140	670	1,556	1,517	1,613
Toride	1,253	926	1,240	1,117	1,010
Ushiku	—	—	795	924	1,655
County					
Higashi-Ibaraki	9,640	7,506	17,023	16,839	16,874
Nishi-Ibaraki	3,263	2,323	5022	4,919	5,233
Kashima	20,891	24,438	34,103	32,650	32,283
Namekata	17,642	29,274	31,114	26,980	28,061
Inashiki	6,031	4553	5,830	6,234	6,572
Kita-Soma	2,042	1239	2,000	2,327	2,492
Total	70,020	75,799	111,933	106,981	111,912

Sources: Secretariat of the House of Representatives, *Shugi-in giin sosenkyo ichiran* (Election results for the general election of the House of Representatives); Asahi Shimbun Senkyo Hombu, eds. *Asahi senkyo taikan* (The Asahi election databook), Asahi Shimbun-sha, 1993, p. 88.

amalgamation of local administrative districts in 1955). Aso consists of five such former village units, and each koenkai has associations made up of young supporters 20–39 years old, supporters in their forties, supporters 51 or older, and women supporters. The former village-unit based koenkai are the most elaborate. Such koenkai are considered the ideal type in Japanese rural electoral politics. There are fewer suborganizations of Nukaga's koenkai in other towns and villages, where support for Nukaga was not so strong as in the former villages in Aso. Still, the koenkai organization is always communitywide.

In urban areas, such as the large provincial city of Mito, it is difficult to establish such neatly divided, well-ordered koenkai. Nukaga's support organizations there are more patchy. For example, in Mito, Nukaga, following in the footsteps of the mayor and city assembly politicians, formed koenkai corresponding to each public elementary school zone. His campaigners also approached all kinds of local associations—community groups such as sports clubs, senior-citizens' clubs, and women's organizations and professional groups related to different business sectors—seeking support for Nukaga. Because such groups often backed rival candidates such as Hanashi Nobuyuki and Nakayama

Toshio, Nukaga sought to mobilize his own supporters within each group. One of his secretaries told me, "In order to increase votes for Nukaga, we must take a multipronged approach and reach out not only to community-based organizations but also to professional business associations."<sup>4</sup> This meant the proliferation of support organizations, dampening efficiency. It was difficult to unify them, and the Nukaga camp feared that trying to do so might bring about friction among his supporters.

In both rural and urban areas, Nukaga cultivated his support base under his own organizational power. There were some cases in which he was forced to rely on local politicians whose *koenkai* were stronger than his. They had their own political rivals. As a result, support from certain local politicians, many of whom were prefectural assembly members or village or town mayors, prevented other local politicians from supporting him. It turned out to be an ineffective way of gathering votes. The same problem is often seen in towns where there are serious rivalries between local politicians. A good example is the town of Hokota in Kashima County. This town has two members of the prefectural assembly who compete fiercely with each other not only during their own election campaigns but also during elections for mayor and councillors of the town. Their factions form deep political cleavages that block decision-making in the town assembly. These two politicians have strong *koenkai* of their own, which obstruct the growth of Nukaga's *koenkai* in their community.<sup>5</sup>

### THE PREELECTION STATE OF AFFAIRS

Until the fortieth Lower House election in 1993, Nukaga had stood in the First District of Ibaraki Prefecture. This district had four seats in the Lower House and the elections were so competitive that at least one incumbent lost in every election. Here, the conservatives, mainly from the LDP, had invariably managed to hang on to two or three seats throughout the post-World War II period. Under these circumstances, Nukaga did not lose his seat.

Under the electoral reforms instituted under the Hosokawa cabinet, Nukaga's district changed from the First to the Second District, and this turned out to be to his advantage because the new district includes areas where the ratio of the votes he is assured is high and

excludes areas where he cannot expect many votes. As shown in table 2, under the previous system, the First District included 5 cities and 6 counties. Under the new system, 15 towns and 4 villages among them have been transferred to the Second District, enclosed by double lines in table 2. In these areas, Nukaga's election performance was very good. Kashima and Namekata counties in particular are areas where Nukaga enjoyed quite strong support. One of the reasons why he obtained such a large portion of the vote in these areas is that they include his hometown of Aso where many of his relatives and close friends live. The strong *koenkai* he built up during his stint in the prefectural assembly is still influential. In addition, his new district does not include Inashiki and Kita-Soma counties, areas where his performance in elections had been relatively poor. The new district, therefore, is so advantageous for him that other parties had trouble finding a candidate strong enough to rival him. A further factor working in his favor is that the non-LDP parties were delayed in selecting their candidates in the 1996 election.

These favorable conditions did not mean, though, that Nukaga did not have to work to extend his support base and attract new voters in the new district (see table 3). According to the data for the 1993 election, the area that would be his new district had about 300,000 voters, though he garnered only about 77,000 votes in that election. This meant that there was a possibility that he might lose his seat in the election to be held under the new electoral system despite the fact that he was the strongest LDP candidate in 1993. A larger voter turnout, without an increase in the vote for him, could lead to his defeat. If he could secure all the votes won by the LDP in 1993, the number of votes for him would be about 130,000. That would ensure him a winning majority even with a voter turnout of 70 percent.

Nukaga had to try to attract new votes. Toward that end, he sought the cooperation of former rivals Hanashi and Nakayama. Hanashi is from the village of Miho in Inashiki County and Nakayama is from the city of Ryugasaki. Both of them were seeking to stand as candidates for the 1996 election from the Third District. Here they worked out an arrangement whereby the senior Hanashi would stand as a proportional vote representative candidate in North Kanto block first and Nakayama would run in the Third District. Then, after five years, they would switch, with Hanashi running as a candidate in the Third District and Nakayama entering the race as a proportional vote candidate.

Table 2. Votes for Nukaga in the 1993 Election and under the New District

		Vote for Nukaga*	New District
City			
	Mito	15.12%	1
	Ryugasaki	2.15	3
	Kasama	10.03	1
	Toride	2.76	3
	Ushiku	5.99	3
County			
	Town or Village		
Higashi-Ibaraki	Ibaraki	28.56	2
	Ogawa	28.88	2
	Minori	23.69	2
	Uchihara	17.30	2
	Johoku	21.16	1
	Katsura	32.56	1
	Gozen-yama	33.52	1
Nishi-Ibaraki	Oarai	30.20	2
	Tomobe	13.37	2
	Iwama	16.41	2
	Nanakai	21.14	1
	Iwase	14.06	1
Kashima	Asahi	42.65	2
	Hokota	44.87	2
	Taiyo	47.72	2
	Ohno	61.34	2
	Kashima	40.30	2
	Kamisu	39.07	2
	Hasaki	29.88	2
	Namekata	Aso	78.62
Inashiki	Ushibori	60.37	2
	Itako	64.64	2
	Kitaura	54.14	2
	Tamatsukuri	62.38	2
	Edosaki	9.32	3
	Miho	6.38	3
	Ami	6.48	3
Kita-Soma	Kukizaki	7.80	3
	Shitone	8.08	3
	Kawachi	6.09	3
	Sakuragawa	20.05	3
	Azuma	25.07	3
	Moriya	7.68	3
Tone	Fujishiro	3.38	3
	Tone	6.57	3

Source: Asahi Shimbun Senkyo Hombu, eds. *Asahi senkyo taikan* (The Asahi election databook), Asahi Shimbun-sha, 1993, p. 88.

\*These values are calculated as the number of votes for Nukaga divided by the number of all votes in each city, town, or village.



Table 3. Eligible Voters in the New District in 1993 General Election

Local Unit	Eligible Voters	Nukaga	Other	LDP Total
Higashi-Ibaraki County				
Ibaraki	26,903	4,409	5,717	10,126
Ogawa	14,381	2,669	3,821	6,490
Minori	16,785	2,287	3,726	6,013
Uchihara	11,435	1,258	2,881	4,139
Oarai	16,048	2,741	2,759	5,500
Nishi-Ibaraki County				
Tomobe	23,527	1,950	4,256	6,206
Iwama	12,536	1,329	2,994	4,323
Kashima County				
Asahi	8,561	2,269	2,108	4,377
Hokota	21,616	5,558	3,077	8,635
Taiyo	8,612	2,670	1,415	4,085
Ohno	10,980	4,399	1,023	5,422
Kashima	31,707	7,002	2,945	9,947
Kamisu	30,163	6,059	2,960	9,019
Hasaki	28,388	4,326	5,190	9,516
Namekata County				
Aso	13,664	9,074	1,111	10,185
Ushibori	4,976	2,203	883	3,086
Itako	19,041	8,506	1,478	9,984
Kitaura	8,451	3,378	1,539	4,917
Tamatsukuri	10,777	4,900	1,402	6,302
Total	318,551	76,987	51,285	128,272
Turnout = 50%		159,275.5		
Turnout = 70%		222,985.7		

Source: Asahi Shimbun Senkyo Hombu, eds. *Asahi senkyo taikan* (The Asahi election databook), Asahi Shimbun-sha, 1993, p. 88.

Other: Votes for Hanashi and Nakayama

Nukaga, who needed to attract supporters of past rivals in the LDP to augment the certainty of his reelection under the new electoral system, approached the Hanashi and Nakayama camps about collaborating during the campaign. They agreed to support each other's campaigns by introducing influential supporters to each other, exchanging their lists of supporters, and arranging meetings of *koenkai* to appeal for cooperation for the other's election.

The arrangement with Nakayama worked out better than that with Hanashi. At least this was the impression of the Nukaga secretaries who worked in the district.<sup>6</sup> Nakayama and Nukaga belonged to the same LDP faction, and for Nakayama, Hanashi was a primary rival because their electoral bases are so geographically close together.

Nukaga's strategy was to emphasize the need to concentrate on LDP supporters (*Tokyo Shimbun* 1996, 23). He and his staff argued that if LDP supporters failed to band together, the share of LDP seats in the Lower House would not increase, that Japanese politics would remain unstable, and that effective economic policies to cope with the recession would not be implemented. They appealed to both their own supporters and those of former LDP rivals to put past hostilities aside and cooperate with one another.

### Rival Candidates

The LDP had no difficulty in selecting its candidate for Ibaraki Prefecture's Second District. Nukaga was an incumbent and had a strong electoral base. Other parties had more difficulty and their selection was delayed. In the end, the New Frontier Party (NFP) selected Tokoi Yoshiharu. The Tokoi family had produced politicians for a long time. Yoshiharu's father, Fumio, had been a member of the prefectural assembly, and he had served as chairman of the assembly for a time until his defeat in the 1994 election as a candidate in the Nishi-Ibaraki County district. His uncle, Tokoi Sadatoshi, is mayor of the town of Tomobe. A published profile (*Ibaraki Shimbun* 1996a, 1) says that two other uncles were local politicians. One was a municipal councillor of Tomobe, and the other was chairman of the Iwama town assembly.

Tokoi Yoshiharu was born in 1955. He graduated from Nihon University and is now the president of Joyo Bussan Company and an ex-vice president of the Junior Chamber of Commerce. His main sources of support were the Tokoi family and the Junior Chamber of Commerce. He launched his campaign for candidacy in April 1996, and his entry into the race was in fact widely regarded as a preliminary to running for the subsequent prefectural assembly election. This was based on the belief that Nukaga was so strong that he would be certain to win. According to one of Nukaga's secretaries, incumbent members of the prefectural assembly from Nishi-Ibaraki County regarded the 1996 election as a prelude to the 1998 elections for the prefectural assembly. They therefore tried to inflict as crushing a defeat as possible on Tokoi.

Another Nukaga rival was from the Japan Communist Party (JCP): Yokokura Tatsushi. Yokokura had been an employee of the Japan

National Railways and lived in the town of Tomobe. His wife was a Tomobe municipal councillor, and he had been a candidate for the town assembly in 1994. His candidacy for the 1996 election had been decided earlier than Tokoi's. However, few considered the JCP strong enough to gain a seat in this election.

## Local Politicians

The changes in the electoral system had significant impact on local LDP politicians. The Ibaraki Prefectural Chapter of the LDP<sup>7</sup> held a meeting concerning the coming election (October 1996), at which managers of the chapter and friendly associations were present. In his opening address, Yamaguchi Buhei, president of the prefectural chapter and a member of the prefectural assembly, asked them to vote for the LDP, irrespective of their personal preferences with regard to candidates (*Yomiuri Shimbun*, Ibaraki edition, September 28, 1996, 29). At this meeting, it was decided to set up a prefectural center for coordination of the election campaign and ensuring cooperation among associations in campaigning. Significantly, the chapter had not organized such meetings for the 1993 election (*Ibaraki Shimbun* 1993, 1). Obviously, the chapter in Ibaraki Prefecture was more active in the 1996 election than in 1993.

Likewise, support from members of the prefectural assembly became more active than in the past. They were all appointed as vice-managers of LDP branches in each electoral district,<sup>8</sup> and they participated in the national election campaign. However, overall, their campaign activities—such as support speeches they delivered at campaign meetings and when accompanying the candidate in the campaign loudspeaker car, to appeal to their own supporters to vote for the candidate—turned out not to be very helpful in gathering votes in many cases.

Whether their help in vote-gathering was significant or not, the members of the prefectural assembly did participate and play a role in the campaign regardless of the personal relationship between themselves and Nukaga. This surely new phenomenon emerged under the strong initiative of the LDP prefectural chapter. Members of the prefectural assembly needed to show at least the appearance of support and cooperation not only to the candidates but also to the chapter. If a member chose to disregard the chapter's wishes, which were much

influenced by the LDP predominance in the prefectural assembly in Ibaraki, he or she would have faced the danger of falling behind the others in terms of career path or worsening his or her position at election time.<sup>9</sup> Under the previous electoral system, members of the prefectural assembly enjoyed more freedom of political action: they could either support a certain candidate or simply stand and watch. But the 1996 election limited their options. They had little choice other than to adopt a cooperative attitude to the candidates and the chapter.

The electoral system reform had a similar effect on the position of the mayors of towns and villages. Under the new system, each Lower House electoral district is represented by only one member. There are also those who are elected to proportional representation seats. The mayors depend on successful lobbying of influential politicians or bureaucrats to obtain more funds from national coffers. If they want to ensure that politicians who will respond favorably to their lobbying are elected to the national government, they cannot afford to be indifferent at the time of national elections. Of course, this may not always be the case; some local governments do enjoy greater independence and autonomy or prefer freedom to more national government subsidies. Rural areas like Ibaraki, however, often depend considerably on public spending and subsidies from the national government. Locally elected members of the Lower House, therefore, are important channels to influence over the national budget for Ibaraki.<sup>10</sup>

Because Nukaga has established himself as a national politician and a close associate of Prime Minister Hashimoto, local politicians in his district find him a valuable channel to the national government and the policy-making process. Ibaraki Prefecture has maintained strong ties with the political faction to which Nukaga belongs. This faction includes four Lower House members from Ibaraki Prefecture: Kajiyama Seiroku (ex-chief cabinet secretary), Nakayama Toshio (ex-director-general of the National Defense Agency), Nakamura Kishiro (ex-minister of construction), and Nukaga. Hashimoto Tomisaburo (Nukaga's predecessor) and Takeuchi Fujio (former governor of Ibaraki and ex-member of the House of Councillors) also belonged to this line. Prime Minister Hashimoto himself belongs to this faction. Nukaga's usefulness for local politicians has been increasing. As a result, all the town and village heads in the Ibaraki Second District expressed support for Nukaga. Even Tokoi Sadatoshi, mayor of Tomobe Town, decided to express support for Nukaga instead of his own uncle, who was the

NFP candidate. Sadatoshi is also the chairman of the political action committee of the Ibaraki Federation of Commerce and Industry, which made a declaration of support for Nukaga in his name.

Support from local mayors, however, is not always of particular value in attracting votes, as is the case with support from members of the prefectural assembly. They often have their own political struggles and rivals to deal with, and cannot completely convert support for themselves to support for other politicians.

### The Nukaga Koenkai

As the 1996 election drew near, Nukaga and his staff were forced to reorganize his koenkai. After the law on electoral reform was approved by the Diet, Nukaga held meetings with the leaders of his koenkai in each town to unite his own supporters and those of Nakayama and Hanashi in his new electoral district. In the areas that were part of the former electoral district and were now outside his new district, he held sessions to express thanks to his supporters there for their efforts thus far and to ask them to shift their support to another LDP candidate.

To attract new voters, Nukaga and his staff approached supporters of Hanashi and Nakayama actively. His secretaries reported that they had proposed an exchange of koenkai members' lists to the Nakayama side first. As Nukaga's original supporters were not comfortable with this approach, he and his staff had much to do to persuade them. As a result of their efforts, there were some areas in which the merging of LDP forces succeeded. The press reported that his effort to join forces with Hanashi and Nakayama had worked well and smoothly (*Ibaraki Shimbun* 1996b, 5; 1996c, 3). But his secretaries told me they had forced patience on Nukaga's original supporters.

On the other hand, in areas that belonged to other districts starting with the 1996 election, Nukaga and his staff did not dissolve his koenkai organizations. One reason was that they considered the possibility that the electoral system might be changed yet again in the near future. If the single nontransferable voting system should revive, the maintenance of these organizations would surely be a plus. This reason is often cited at the Nukaga office. His office accords ample respect to these ties. Another reason we can presume for keeping up these organizations despite the cost and effort is to maintain a measure of

influence upon Hanashi, Nakayama, and Akagi Norihiko, an LDP candidate in Ibaraki's First District, which includes Mito City.

Nukaga and his staff worked hard to organize his supporters, and their efforts turned out to be very successful. If these organizations are kept intact and support other LDP candidates, when Nukaga needs support from his colleagues, he can get it more easily. It can also give him an advantage in intraparty politics at the national level. He invests his own resources (time, money, etc.) not only for his own reelection but also to increase his influence in national politics. He makes a point of devoting as much time as he can outside his own electoral district, despite requests from his supporters to spend more time in his home base. This approach contrasts sharply with that of Hanashi, who was defeated in three consecutive elections from 1958 to 1963, and spent much time mainly in his home district (Inoguchi and Iwai 1987, 44-66). He was elected to the Diet in 1967 and kept winning in subsequent elections. His influence on the national level or in the central organization of the LDP, however, is quite limited.

Nukaga prefers to strengthen his own political influence at the national level, and believes that this in turn will work favorably for the district. So, he allots as much time to activities outside the district as possible. For a person like him, with ambitions to be an influential politician on the national level, it would be absurd to dissolve any of the *koenkai* organizations into which he and his staff had invested great energy and resources.

An additional reason for keeping *koenkai* organizations in other electoral districts intact under the new electoral system is that it is advantageous for supporters who live in these districts. If their organizations should be dissolved, they might be reorganized under the initiative of a new candidate, often a former rival. Moreover, the new candidate already has his or her own original *koenkai*, with which it is hard for them to get along. If their organizations are maintained, they can be both influential with the new candidate and maintain contact with the politician for whom they voted in the past. They use both politicians as channels to influence national policy making.

## Organizational Support

Many letters of support came into Nukaga's campaign office in Aso from a wide variety of associations and labor unions such as the Hitachi Ltd. Workers' Union and the Electrical Machine Workers' Union. This support was forthcoming partly because of the absence of candidates for the Social Democratic Party (SDP, the former Japan Socialist Party) or the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), both of which are backed by labor unions, and partly because of the fact that Nukaga was the first head of the LDP's Labor Administration Division (*Ibaraki Shimbun* 1996d, 1).

The Buddhist organization Rissho Koseikai also became active in politics<sup>11</sup> when its religious center in Mito decided to support LDP candidates in the First, Second, and Fourth Districts and asked members of its parish to help the candidates with compilation of koenkai members' lists. The church also campaigned by telephone, asking people to vote for LDP candidates. Nukaga's mother is a member of Rissho Koseikai, and Nukaga himself is a graduate of the Kosei Gakuen High School founded by the organization. This order is believed to have sway over more than 100,000 votes in Ibaraki. It has been a favorable voting constituency for Nukaga.

## THE 1996 ELECTION CAMPAIGN

On September 27, the Lower House was dissolved by Prime Minister Hashimoto. The government had already decided to shorten the campaign period from fourteen to twelve days as part of the electoral system reform.

Nukaga stood as a candidate in the Second District in Ibaraki Prefecture and was also nominated as a proportional representation system LDP candidate ranked in eighth place for the North Kanto block. This ranking had been decided at the party headquarters and was not known to candidates before the official announcement that elections were to be held. Sixteen incumbents including Nukaga held this eighth rank. As far as could be observed, Nukaga had concentrated on winning the single-seat district contest and he had devised no special strategy for gaining proportional representation votes.

Nukaga set up campaign offices in the towns of Aso, Itako, Ibaraki, and Kamisu, with the headquarters at Aso. As the location usually

used was rather small, he and his staff moved to larger facilities on September 25 to make it easier for many people to gather. The office in the town of Ibaraki was for campaigning in Higashi-Ibaraki and Nishi-Ibaraki counties, while the Kamisu office was for Kashima County. According to one of Nukaga's secretaries, though their camp had originally had no plans to set up an office in Itako, once the Tokoi camp set up an office there, it seemed wise to counter the Tokoi move.

The official leader of the overall campaign was the mayor of Aso, Kurimata Kozo, and subleaders were municipal councillors of Aso. Under them, teams of seven or eight staff worked in general affairs, planning, publicity, public relations, and canvassing.

The Nukaga camp campaign style consisted primarily of (1) door-to-door campaigning by koenkai members who visit voters' houses with visiting cards, pamphlets, and koenkai registration cards (this form of mass neighborhood canvassing is known as "roller operations"); (2) personal canvassing at mass meetings by Nukaga; (3) meetings with leaders and subleaders of the koenkai; and (4) telephone calls to eligible voters by female members of the koenkai. The so-called roller operation is the most basic vote-getting tactic used by koenkai members.

Campaign rallies and meetings were held in almost every town and city. In Hashimoto Tomisaburo's hometown of Itako, the central community center was used for meetings, which began at 8:00 P.M. At one meeting that I attended, about five hundred supporters, two members of the prefectural assembly of the Namekata County district (Yokota Shuhei and Katori Mamoru), the mayors of Itako and Aso, and Nukaga himself were present. Yokota, vice-director of the Second District branch of the LDP, who had been Nukaga's rival in the 1978 election for the prefectural assembly, declared to those assembled that "past levels of support for Nukaga would not be enough to win him a seat. We must have another 20,000 votes." He then asked them for their help and cooperation. Katori, ex-secretary to Hashimoto, emphasized that Nukaga was Hashimoto's chosen successor and asked for stronger support. Imaizumi Yawara, the mayor of Itako, pressed further, saying, "We have supported Nukaga's political career thus far and now we can look forward to his endeavors to return us the favor."

At the Hokota community center, about five hundred people were present, including two members of the prefectural assembly of the Kashima County district (Honzawa Shoji and Onizawa Chuji); the



heads of Aso and Taiyo villages; Sakamoto Tsunezo, a founding member of a Hashimoto koenkai and the president of a federation of Nukaga koenkai; and Nukaga.

At both meetings in Itako and Hokota, LDP pamphlets were distributed, stressing the differences between the LDP and the NFP. They presented the LDP as liberal and democratic and the driving force for peace. They presented the NFP, on the other hand, as coercive and dictatorial and promoting the dispatch of Japanese troops to foreign countries. They also identified the NFP with the Sokagakkai, the powerful lay Buddhist organization that supports the party.

In his speeches, Nukaga advocated public financing to deal with the *jusen* problem (mammoth bad loans of failed housing loan companies) and the decision to increase the consumption tax rate; criticized the Hosokawa and Hata cabinets, as well as the policies of the NFP; emphasized the necessity for stable government under the LDP; and promised to promote policies for construction of transport infrastructure (highways, an airport) in Ibaraki Prefecture. These were his constant themes. With regard to the *jusen* problem, he emphasized that public funds needed to be used to protect financial credibility in Japan. Regarding the consumption tax, he defended the increase in the indirect tax, arguing that the increase corresponded to reducing income and residential taxes foregone, and that, moreover, increased tax revenue would mean increased funds upon which local municipalities could draw. Both his rivals, Tokoi and Yokokura, opposed the consumption tax increase.<sup>12</sup>

Nukaga criticized the Hosokawa and Hata cabinets for doing nothing to bring about the recovery of the Japanese economy. He condemned the inconsistency of NFP policies, especially relating to taxation, but, significantly enough, said nothing about the Sokagakkai. He emphasized the difficulties of managing a coalition government, as balancing the demands of various parties inevitably involves a great deal of wasted time. He proposed a plan to extend the Higashi-Kanto Expressway to Mito and the building of a new Kita-Kanto Highway. He also made an appeal for more nonmilitary use of the Hyakuri Base owned by the Air Self-Defense Force in the town of Ogawa. His arguments enjoyed a generally favorable reception.

Campaign intensity was lower in the 1996 race than in previous elections. At least that was the evaluation of Nukaga's staff. One reason for the slower pace is the stricter regulations in force requiring that a

candidate must share responsibility for violations of election law committed by campaign managers or finance officers under the new electoral system. Because of this reform, activists are forced to exercise greater caution in their campaigning.

According to Nukaga's office staff, the need to exercise self-restraint in the use of funds for food and drink for campaigners tended to dampen morale. One of the staff said, "In earlier elections, we had meetings at the office every night until 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning and people were in high spirits throughout the campaign. In this election, the office is closed at 12 o'clock." Another reason, however, is a slackness stemming from members' optimistic view of Nukaga's reelection. I heard the office staff discuss with concern the lack of thoroughness in distribution of pamphlets and transmission of information, especially in one town in Namekata County. One staff member sighed mournfully, "This is the rival's home ground, so I can understand the lack of energy, but [we really can't afford such laxity]."

## ELECTION RESULTS

Table 4 shows the results of the 1996 election in the Ibaraki Prefecture Second District. Nukaga succeeded in winning a seat in the Lower House for the fifth time. It was a resounding victory, with the votes for him exceeding the total votes for both Tokoi and Yokokura. Nukaga won in every municipality except Iwama, Nishi-Ibaraki County. Even in Tokoi's hometown of Tomobe, Nukaga won more votes than Tokoi. On the other hand, although Tokoi's father had drawn 5,858 votes in Tomobe and 4,489 votes in Iwama in the 1994 prefectural assembly election, his son got fewer votes in both towns in the 1996 national election.

To understand Nukaga's electoral performance in this election, let us compare it to that in the 1993 election (see table 5). We can see that the vote for Nukaga increased by about 42 percent (about 32,000) as shown at the bottom of the E/C column. This means that he won many more votes than had been the case for his former rivals, Hanashi and Nakayama, in the previous election. He was especially successful in Higashi-Ibaraki and Nishi-Ibaraki counties. On the other hand, in Namekata County, one of his original constituencies, he failed to win more votes than previously. In Aso (his hometown) and Itako (the

Table 4. Ibaraki Prefecture Second District 1996 Election Results

	Yokokura JCP	Nukaga LDP	Tokoi NFP	Eligible Voters
Kashima*	1,766	14,580	7,070	45,360
Higashi-Ibaraki County	3,685	27,097	16,833	88,673
Ibaraki	1,074	8,590	5,025	27,634
Ogawa	547	5,413	2,476	14,951
Minori	829	5,042	3,364	18,112
Uchihara	556	3,533	2,547	11,790
Oarai	679	4,519	3,421	16,186
Nishi-Ibaraki County	2,503	10,133	9,033	38,152
Tomobe	2,039	6,607	5,493	25,289
Iwama	464	3,526	3,540	12,863
Kashima County	3,486	29,487	14,259	102,955
Asahi	182	3,112	1,165	8,924
Hokota	839	7,029	2,803	22,326
Taiyo	372	3,163	1,273	9,161
Kamisu	1,186	8,241	5,253	33,010
Hasaki	907	7,942	3,765	29,534
Namekata County	1,599	27,842	6,943	57,804
Aso	246	8,545	1,180	13,579
Ushibori	96	2,319	504	4,956
Itako	680	7,884	2,777	19,805
Kitaura	272	3,916	904	8,509
Tamatsukuri	305	5,178	1,578	10,955
District Total	13,039	109,139	54,138	332,944
District Voter Turnout = 54.58%				

Source: *Ibaraki Shimbun*, October 20, 1996, p. 3, and October 21, 1996, p. 2.

\* The city of Kashima was established through the merger of the town of Kashima and the village of Ono.

home of his predecessor), his vote decreased. In total, he won 85 percent of the votes garnered by all the LDP candidates together in the 1993 election (column E/D). In the city of Kashima and the towns of Tomobe and Kamisu, he did well. In Tomobe, notably, which is the hometown of his rivals, Tokoi and Yokokura, he got more votes than all LDP candidates together had done in 1993. He did poorly in Asahi, Taiyo, Ushibori, and Itako. We can confirm these results in other columns. Columns C/A and E/B denote the percentages of his share in all constituencies in 1993 and 1996. The figures at the bottom indicate that his share of the vote increased from 24 percent to 33 percent. From these columns, we can see that his share of the vote in Namekata and Kashima counties did not increase appreciably, although they

Table 5. Nukaga Election Performances in 1993 and 1996

	A	B	C	D	E	B/A	E/C	E/D	C/A	E/B
Kashima*	42,687	45,360	11,401	15,369	14,580	1.06	1.28	0.95	0.27	0.32
Higashi-Ibaraki County										
Ibaraki	26,903	27,634	4,409	10,126	8,590	1.03	1.95	0.85	0.16	0.31
Ogawa	14,381	14,951	2,669	6,490	5,413	1.04	2.03	0.83	0.19	0.36
Minori	16,785	18,112	2,287	6,013	5,042	1.08	2.20	0.84	0.14	0.28
Uchihara	11,435	11,790	1,258	4,139	3,533	1.03	2.81	0.85	0.11	0.30
Oarai	16,048	16,186	2,741	5,500	4,519	1.01	1.65	0.82	0.17	0.28
Nishi-Ibaraki County										
Tomobe	23,527	25,289	1,950	6,206	6,607	1.07	3.39	1.06	0.08	0.26
Iwama	12,536	12,863	1,329	4,323	3,526	1.03	2.65	0.82	0.11	0.27
Kashima County										
Asahi	8,561	8,924	2,269	4,377	3,112	1.04	1.37	0.71	0.27	0.35
Hokota	21,616	22,326	5,558	8,635	7,029	1.03	1.26	0.81	0.26	0.31
Taiyo	8,612	9,161	2,670	4,085	3,163	1.06	1.18	0.77	0.31	0.35
Kamisu	30,163	33,010	6,059	9,019	8,241	1.09	1.36	0.91	0.20	0.25
Hasaki	28,388	29,534	4,326	9,516	7,942	1.04	1.84	0.83	0.15	0.27
Namekata County										
Aso	13,664	13,579	9,074	10,185	8,545	0.99	0.94	0.84	0.66	0.63
Ushibori	4,976	4,956	2,203	3,086	2,319	1.00	1.05	0.75	0.44	0.47
Itako	19,041	19,805	8,506	9,984	7,884	1.04	0.93	0.79	0.45	0.40
Kitaura	8,451	8,509	3,378	4,917	3,916	1.01	1.16	0.80	0.40	0.46
Tamatsukuri	10,777	10,955	4,900	6,302	5,178	1.02	1.06	0.82	0.45	0.47
Total	318,551	332,944	76,987	128,272	109,139	1.05	1.42	0.85	0.24	0.33

Source: *Ibaraki Shimbun*, October 20, 1996, p. 3, and October 21, 1996, p. 2.

A: Number of eligible voters in 1993

B: Number of eligible voters in 1996

C: Number of votes for Nukaga in 1993

D: Total number of votes for Hanashi, Nakayama, and Nukaga in 1993

E: Number of votes for Nukaga in 1996

\* The city of Kashima was established through the merger of the town of Kashima and the village of Ono.

remain a strong election base for him. His share decreased particularly in Aso and Itako. In general, members of the Lower House in the LDP camp tend to decrease imbalances in the share of the vote among different communities as the frequency of reelection increases (Mizusaki 1991). The case of Nukaga seems to conform to this pattern.<sup>13</sup>

On the other hand, non-LDP parties failed to increase their margin of votes under the new system. In the old Ibaraki First District, which had four Lower House seats, candidates from the Japan Socialist Party (JSP) and the Democratic Socialist Party (DSP) had competed against three LDP candidates since 1979, and in the 1983 election especially, both the JSP and DSP candidates won.

As we discussed, the old Ibaraki First District was reorganized into three new districts, which split SDP and DSP supporters into three groups. Both Tsukada Enju, the incumbent candidate of the NFP and a former DSP member, and Tokizaki Yuji, a former JSP Lower House member who joined the DPJ before the 1996 election, decided to run from the new Ibaraki First District. In the new Ibaraki Second District, both the SDP and the newly formed DPJ failed to field their own candidates. The NFP selected Tokoi Yoshiharu as a candidate, expecting that he might receive the support of electorates who voted for the JSP in the previous election.

In some sense, the NFP's strategy succeeded. Tokoi received 54,138 votes in this election, almost the same number that the Socialists and the DSP together garnered in the 1993 election (see tables 4 and 6). It was, however, still far from the necessary number to win. Because the number of Lower House seats apportioned to the district level was reduced from 511 to 300, the new single-seat district system, not taking into account the voter turnout rate, theoretically required more votes to win. Tokoi failed to increase his support.

The JCP candidate earned more than twice the votes as compared with the previous election in almost every county (see tables 4 and 6). The number was, however, far short of that needed to win.

## CONCLUSIONS

The transformation of the electoral system from the multiseat district system combined with single non-transferable voting to a combination of the single-seat district system with the proportional

Table 6. Vote for Parties in the 1993 Election

	All LDP	SDPJ (Tokizaki)	DSP (Tsukada)	JCP (Sekido)	Eligible Voters
Kashima*	15,369	2,959	5,469	749	42,687
Higashi-Ibaraki County	32,268	6,387	10,051	1,973	85,552
Ibaraki	10,126	2,004	2,768	539	26,903
Ogawa	6,490	833	1,661	258	14,381
Minori	6,013	1,244	1,984	413	16,785
Uchihara	4,139	1,214	1,645	272	11,435
Oarai	5,500	1,092	1,993	491	16,048
Nishi-Ibaraki County	10,529	3,838	7,657	661	36,063
Tomobe	6,206	2,790	5,091	497	23,527
Iwama	4,323	1,048	2,566	164	12,536
Kashima County	35,632	5,519	10,436	1,702	97,340
Asahi	4,377	368	486	89	8,561
Hokota	8,635	1,585	1,772	396	21,616
Taiyo	4,085	536	816	158	8,612
Kamisu	9,019	1,592	4,245	653	30,163
Hasaki	9,516	1,438	3,117	406	28,388
Namekata County	34,474	3,141	3,937	892	56,909
Aso	10,185	588	638	130	13,664
Ushibori	3,086	185	318	60	4,976
Itako	9,984	1,031	1,771	374	19,041
Kitaura	4,917	711	463	148	8,451
Tamatsukuri	6,302	626	747	180	10,777
Total for District	128,272	21,844	37,550	5,977	318,551

Source: Asahi Shimbun Senkyo Hombu, eds. *Asahi senkyo taikan* (The Asahi election databook), Asahi Shimbun-sha, 1993, p. 88.

\* The city of Kashima was established through the merger of the town of Kashima and the village of Ono.

representation system on regional (multiprefecture) blocks was intended to serve as a transition from candidate-oriented to party-oriented elections. Whether or not this purpose has been achieved remains to be seen. At least concerning the case presented in this chapter, we observed some signs of that achievement. One example of this is increased support by the prefectural chapters of the LDP. Another is the content of Nukaga's electioneering, namely, his active advocacy of LDP policies and explicit criticism of the NFP.

At the same time, these signs of change should not be overemphasized. Although the party prefectural chapter certainly did support candidates more actively than previously, that support remains supplementary to their campaigning, with the main thrust continuing to be

spearheaded by the *koenkai* of each candidate. Help from members of the prefectural assembly is still not substantial. The effect on voters of the content of campaign speeches is doubtful. However, it is a significant change that local politicians and local party organizations have come to support each other in concert, even superficially. The change in the content of the candidates' speeches, too, is significant.

We can point out some conditions that brought about these changes. One is the adoption of the single-seat district system. This made it necessary to emphasize the differences between the LDP and the NFP, as reflected in Nukaga's campaign speeches. Moreover, it narrowed the discretion of local politicians. One of Nukaga's secretaries said to me, "Double-dealing has disappeared." Local politicians had to cooperate with the LDP and the party's candidate so that they could maintain good relationships with members of the Lower House and the party. This tendency grew stronger in areas like Ibaraki, where LDP dominance is overwhelming. Under the previous electoral system, they could choose a candidate to support or do nothing, so as to retain autonomy from national politicians. In fact, they still win more votes than national politicians in their own elections in each town. In that sense, local politicians retain a large measure of independence.

Under the current system, only one person is elected a member of the Lower House in each district. This means that he or she becomes the sole channel to Lower House policy making. In an area where the degree of budgetary autonomy is high—often urban areas—and which does not need public spending by the national government, local politicians may not have to concern themselves with such matters. This discussion, therefore, is mainly applicable to those areas where mediation of local interests is among the key activities expected of politicians on the national level. Ibaraki Prefecture is one of many such areas.

We may also conjecture that active support by the LDP prefectural chapter is due not only to changes in the electoral system but also to the comeback of the LDP as ruling party. Those who contribute to the victory of the LDP under the Hashimoto cabinet can expect greater rewards in national budget appropriations. This is not an institutional but a situational factor brought about by the change of regimes. In Ibaraki Prefecture, the LDP won a Lower House seat in almost every single-seat district. Among Lower House members for Ibaraki, only Nukaga and Akagi have yet to serve in a cabinet post. Local politicians in Ibaraki naturally expect more from the central government.

A further conclusion we may draw is that, with the increasing desire to secure election of national politicians who will effectively mediate on behalf of local interests, the role of the party in electoral politics is growing more important. This development may be regarded as a process of party institutionalization through mediation of local interests.

Koenkai, however, remain essential. For conservative Japanese lawmakers, whether national or local, koenkai are still the most important power resource. Strong koenkai will ensure success in their political careers even if further reforms are made in the electoral system. Although LDP political power is strong, it still does not foster party activists on the local level. It does not even try. Taking the example of Ibaraki in this election for instance, local organizations such as the LDP prefectural chapter and local politicians, especially members of the prefectural assembly, acted in concert to a certain extent. But all that exists in the conservative camp at the local level are networks between politicians and supporters, federations among politicians, and lateral alliances between federations and interest groups. There are no party activists at all.

## NOTES

1. I would like to thank Mr. Nukaga and his staff for their goodwill and cooperation in the research for this study. I also wish to thank Raj Vasil for his helpful comments on the draft and Pamela J. Noda for her editing work.

2. Interview with Nukaga at his office in the House of Representatives on September 4, 1991.

3. Interview with Sugaya Yasumune at his home, Ono, Ibaraki Prefecture, May 5, 1992.

4. Interview with Miyakubo Mamoru, one of Nukaga's secretaries, who was in charge of Mito, May 26, 1992, at Nukaga's local office in Mito, Ibaraki Prefecture.

5. Comment of Katabami Kazuhiko, ex-secretary of Nukaga, October 20, 1994, at his office in Hokota.

6. Comments of Nukaga's secretaries. They have a high estimation of Nakayama's personality, an estimation that is consistent with my research since 1991.

7. The power structure of prefectural chapters varies. In Ibaraki, members of the prefectural assembly have considerable autonomy from national politicians.



Newspaper reports stated that about half of them were independent of the *keiretsu* links to national politicians (*Ibaraki Shimbun*, June 26, 1993, 1). For one of very few studies on prefectural chapters, see Kataoka, 1994, 153–166.

8. Managers of LDP branches in the electoral districts are those who run for election within these districts.

9. In many cases, the LDP prefectural chapters have their own system of political career paths. See Kataoka, 1994, 157–160.

10. Some studies show the relationship between the power of LDP politicians and public works subsidies (Iwagami 1991, 277–297; Hori 1996, 117–138; Kobayashi 1997, 126–148; Moriwaki 1997).

11. *Ibaraki Shimbun*, October 6, 1996, 19. I heard similar comments from Nukaga's campaigners in his Aso office on October 11.

12. See *Ibaraki Shimbun*, October 10, 1996, 5, as an example.

13. As for this tendency of Hashimoto Tomisaburo and Nukaga from 1947 to 1990, see Yamada 1993, chapter 7.

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