

Failed Reform and Policy Changes of the SDPJ

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FOR the first time since the Katayama cabinet in the late 1940s, the Social Democratic Party of Japan (SDPJ)¹ entered office as part of a non-Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) coalition government in 1993. Only one year later, the SDPJ formed a government with its old nemesis, the LDP, and a small centrist party called the New Party Sakigake (*sakigake* means "pioneer") founded by LDP defectors. At this time the SDPJ, which critics formerly labeled as a "party that opposed everything," or "the perpetual opposition," abandoned its dogmatic leftist policies and transformed itself into what those same critics regarded as "a responsible party with realistic policies."

Indicative of this transformation was the party's about-face on defense and foreign affairs issues. At the time the SDPJ joined the non-LDP coalition government, party leaders signed an agreement indicating acceptance of the fundamental policies of the LDP government, which meant in effect that as long as it was part of the ruling coalition, the SDPJ would neither challenge the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty nor call into question the legality of the Self-Defense Forces as it had done in the past. With the establishment of an LDP-SDPJ-Sakigake government, the Socialist leader Murayama Tomiichi became prime minister and the SDPJ officially relinquished its basic stance of "constitutional pacifism."²

The SDPJ, formerly called the Japan Socialist Party (JSP), had long clung to its dogmatic leftist positions, despite a widespread perception that they had caused the party's appeal to stagnate. Even after the

then-JSP began reviewing its leftist policies in the mid-1980s, resistance by deeply rooted leftist forces within the party blocked any attempts to modify the philosophy of constitutional pacifism. Within a year after the start of the non-LDP coalition government, however, the SDPJ was able to breach its long-standing ideological framework of constitutional pacifism. How did it accomplish this feat? The question is intellectually challenging because the theme in the literature on the JSP/SDPJ to date has focused exclusively on why the JSP/SDPJ repeatedly failed to transform itself into a more "realistic" party.

It is equally significant to consider the consequence of the sudden about-face of the JSP/SDPJ: the plunge in public popularity subsequently experienced by the party. After changing its name to the Social Democratic Party (SDP) in January 1996, the party fissured, with many Diet members defecting to other parties, and the remaining SDP forces barely survived the general election of the House of Representatives (Lower House) in October 1996, retaining only 15 seats. If the party's leftist policies had been the cause of its stagnation, why didn't their revision restore the party's popularity? Instead, the JSP/SDPJ experienced an even worse fate than stagnation as the largest opposition party: becoming a minor (albeit, ruling) party.

I would argue that the most important factor in explaining the transformative process of the JSP/SDPJ is its major constituency, organized labor, as suggested by the model of power resource mobilization presented by Korpi (1978). This model posits that organized labor serves as the underpinning of many Socialist or pro-labor union parties, and the degree to which the links between parties and labor unions have been institutionalized is the key to understanding the parties' strategy or behavior. This model can be applied to the JSP and its affiliated union group, Sōhyō (General Council of Trade Unions of Japan). Therefore, it is essential that we examine interactions between the JSP and Sōhyō to understand the policy changes of the JSP.

The institutional settings of power resource mobilization are critical factors, as well. The theory of historical institutionalism suggests that institutions define political struggles. Institutions can include both formal organizations and informal rules and procedures that structure conduct (Thelen and Steinmo 1992, 2). As resilient and solidly established as they are by definition, institutions are subject to drastic change when an emergency arises that cannot be dealt with according to routines or conventions (see Gourevitch 1986).

Labor's degree of penetration into the JSP/SDPJ was dependent on the party's institutions. The JSP/SDPJ's organizational dependence on labor and the primacy of the party convention as the main decision-making body allowed leftist labor elements to predominate in the party. Moreover, the electoral system, a much broader institution, determined the JSP/SDPJ's strategy and conduct. Before the 1996 Lower House election, Japan's multiseat district system allowed candidates to secure seats with a relatively low proportion of the vote. (Under the multiseat district system, each district had from two to six seats. Thus, a candidate needed to secure 33.4 percent of the vote to win in a two-seat district, and only 16.7 percent of the vote in a six-seat district.) The system allowed the JSP/SDPJ to retain its second-place status (following the LDP) by relying mainly on labor unions' ability to mobilize their members in elections. The JSP/SDPJ neglected to try to expand its support among the electorate.

Concurrent with the JSP's policy shift and subsequent decline, all of the above-mentioned factors changed dramatically. The declining influence of the leftist-oriented labor movement, combined with the party abandoning the primacy in decision making it had formerly placed on the national convention under the pressure of joining the ruling coalition, led to the review of former leftist policies. Under the newly introduced single-seat district system combined with proportional representation, the SDPJ/SDP attempted to overcome its organizational dependence on labor and forge a new path for power resource mobilization, but it was unsuccessful. The fissure and decline of the SDPJ/SDP was thus caused by the party's strategic inability to respond effectively to the new electoral system.

In the first two sections of this chapter, I will explain the earlier leftist principles of the JSP/SDPJ. Then, in the third section, I will explain why the party's review of its leftist policies in the 1980s succeeded in eliminating Marxist principles from the party discipline but failed to alter the party's fundamental stance of constitutionally based pacifism. The fourth section outlines the background behind the party's institutional changes and its sudden abandonment of constitutional pacifism. The fifth and sixth sections deal with why the Socialists suffered sharp electoral setbacks despite their swing to the right. Two factors are especially noteworthy in this respect: the SDPJ/SDP's strategic failure to mobilize new power resources and the effects of the new electoral system.³

TWO BASIC PARTY PRINCIPLES CAUSE CONTROVERSY

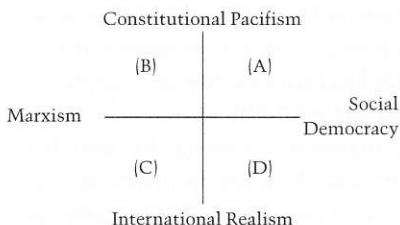
The Japan Socialist Party was notorious for its internal division between leftist and rightist forces. Although the internal tensions arose from a complicated variety of causes, two issues can be identified as the major sources of confrontation throughout the party's history. The first issue concerned whether the JSP should be class-oriented or mass-oriented. Leftists argued that the JSP must be class-oriented, whereas the right wing insisted that the JSP be based on much broader constituencies, including not only wage earners but farmers, the self-employed, small and medium-sized business owners, and others.

While this first issue provides a universal criterion by which to distinguish the right wing from the left wing in leftist politics, the second issue concerning defense and national security is historically specific to postwar Japan. In the face of heightened tensions between the West and the East, the General Headquarters of the Supreme Commander for Allied Powers (SCAP) modified its policy of permanently disarming Japan and supporting the growth of liberal and leftist forces as part of a democracy. Communists were oppressed and purged from the workplace, and at the outbreak of the Korean War the government instituted the Police Reserves, which evolved into the Self-Defense Forces in 1954.

From that period on, in opposition to Japan's involvement in the cold war, the JSP leftists insisted on the maintenance of pacifism as expressed in the Constitution, which, ironically, had been drafted by SCAP officials. They proposed the philosophy of unarmed neutralism as the best way to adhere to the spirit of the Peace Constitution. Right-wing factions in the JSP were not necessarily opposed to the Peace Constitution or neutralism as an ideal, but they contended that the JSP must accept the reality of the worldwide cold war and present a concrete plan indicating clearly how to achieve their ideal. The rightists criticized the leftists by stating that hoisting the flag of neutrality without a realistic alternative is not what a "responsible party" (meaning a party responsible to the people) should do. In retrospect, the rightist arguments appear to have been reasonable. At the time, however, due to increased tension between idealistic pacifism and conservative realism, those in the Socialist right espousing "realistic policies" appeared to many to be in sympathy with the conservatives.

This schism is illustrated in figure 1. The vertical axis shows constitutional pacifism and international realism, and the horizontal axis shows Marxism and social democracy. Leftists and rightists in the party in the 1950s are largely represented by (B) and (D), respectively. In other words, the leftists advocated Marxism and constitutional pacifism, while the rightists favored social democracy and international realism.

Figure 1. Division within the JSP



The nature of this confrontation changed abruptly after 1960, when the rightists who advocated international realism split from the JSP and formed the Democratic Socialist Party (DSP). The remaining JSP members reached a consensus that enabled the party from then on to identify itself as the party of constitutional

pacifism. Henceforth, the party's internal tensions primarily centered on conflicts between those espousing social democracy and the Marxists, that is, between (A) and (B).

Curiously, in the confrontation between (A) and (B), those advocating social democracy were not exclusively right-wing members who had remained in the JSP. The views of some leftist members, who advocated "structural reform" of Japanese society, came into conflict with the orthodox Marxist assumptions of Socialist revolution. The philosophy of structural reform resembled that of social democracy, in that it proposed modifying the negative effects of capitalism through democratic procedures. Structural reformers, however, reproached social democrats for their "piecemeal reforms" (*kairyō shugi*). Structural reformers presumably wanted to avoid being identified with social democrats, because the latter were often criticized as having acquiesced to fascism and totalitarianism during World War II. Strategically, however, they made a wrong choice. Since both branches of the party subscribed to constitutional pacifism, the only clear-cut position from which they could credibly attack the Marxists (B) was that of social democracy (A). Structural reformers were unable to secure a place of their own in this scheme, thereby making their position too vague and obscure to appeal to potential allies.

The structural reformists' approach failed in 1964 when the JSP adopted a document called "The Road to Socialism in Japan" as an

official supplement to its platform. This document calls for a Socialist revolution based on the Marxist-Leninist assumption that wage earners pauperized through capitalist exploitation would be unified as a revolutionary class. The idea of peaceful revolution presented in "Road to Socialism" certainly deviated from Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy. However, the document did not suggest that the JSP follow the rules of parliamentary democracy after it acquired power. "Road to Socialism" contended that gaining a majority in the Diet is useful for the revolution only when the Diet is surrounded by a national front against monopolistic capitalists. Once obtaining power, the Socialists would monopolize it in order to carry out their destiny to build a Socialist society. The adoption of "Road to Socialism" thus determined the JSP's character from the late 1960s onward as an explicitly Marxist party hostile to social democracy.

LEFTISTS AND THE JSP

Although it managed to become the largest opposition party, the JSP remained out of power throughout its history, and it continued to lose popularity after the late 1950s. The 166 seats gained in the 1958 Lower House election proved to be the party's best showing, to its members' great disappointment. After hitting bottom with 90 seats in 1969, the JSP recovered to claim 118 seats in 1972 and 123 in 1976. In 1979, however, it suffered another reversal and its seat count plunged to 107. Meanwhile, the JSP's share of the total vote in the Lower House election declined from 32.9 percent in the 1958 election to 19.3 percent in the 1979 election (Masumi 1985, 621).

In spite of the broadly shared view that the JSP's prolonged stagnation and decline was caused by its unrealistic, leftist policies, the JSP held to the tenets of Marxism and constitutional pacifism during this period. In trying to explain the JSP's continuing leftist orientation, we must examine its links to organized labor. As a pro-labor party, the JSP's actions and policies were greatly shaped by the positions taken by organized labor. The preference of the JSP's major constituency, the leftist-oriented Sōhyō, was reflected in every critical decision made by the JSP. A temporary split of the JSP in 1949 was caused by an attempt by left-wing unionists (who later organized Sōhyō) to steer the party leftward. When a confrontation between the right and left intensified over the ratification of the San Francisco Peace Treaty in the

fall of 1951, Sōhyō led the left-wing factions in defecting from the party.⁴ The reunification of the JSP in 1955 would have not been successful without the support of Takano Minoru, chairman of Sōhyō.

Over time, the JSP became organizationally dependent upon Sōhyō or unions affiliated with Sōhyō, allowing labor forces to strongly influence JSP policy making. According to Stockwin, "this was expressed at the electoral level, where a high proportion of endorsed party candidates were former trade unionists from unions attached to the Federation [Sōhyō], and derived much of their electoral organization and funds from their former unions rather than from the Party itself. This continued dependence upon trade unions both for its supply of electoral candidates and for much of the logistics of local organization remains the Achilles heel of the JSP, and has inhibited the growth of a broader and more independent organizational base" (1982, 176; see also Taguchi 1969; Watanabe 1991; Ōtake 1996).

Sōhyō affiliates accounted for 42.4 percent of the JSP Lower House members on average from 1958 to 1979. In the case of elections for the House of Councillors (Upper House), the ratio reached 66 percent (Masumi 1985, 561–562). It is therefore no exaggeration to refer to the JSP as the political arm of Sōhyō.

Sōhyō's own stance was driven leftward by a leadership dominated by the members of an ultraleft faction, the Socialist Association. The Socialist Association was established in 1951 by anticommunist left-wing Socialists as a Marxist study organization, not for the purpose of engaging in political activity. Within the JSP, its members belonged to the largest leftist group, the Sasaki faction. By engaging in debates with rightist factions, the Socialist Association established ideological hegemony within the party. Its dominance was confirmed with the adoption of "Road to Socialism" in 1964.

Throughout the 1960s, the Socialist Association had grown to be a *de facto* political faction. It increased its members and sympathizers in local chapters and secretariats through such activities as producing its own daily newspaper and organizing Marxist study groups. By the late 1960s, the association came to be identified as a cohesive political group, the source of the largest number of delegates to the JSP's party convention. It could no longer hide in the shade of the Sasaki faction.

The JSP adopted rules and procedures that would promote both organized labor and the Socialist Association. Despite its assertion that it was a class-based party with a broad grass-roots membership, the

poorly organized JSP was actually no more than a parliamentary party. The JSP's annual national convention was supposed to serve as its supreme decision-making body, but in practice in the 1950s the party was managed and controlled by its Diet members. To strengthen the party organization and curtail the power of Diet members, the JSP conducted a major reform in 1958 by depriving its Diet members of the privilege of qualifying automatically as delegates to the convention, rearranging the secretariat to increase its power and authority, and introducing a system that would expand and strengthen local organizations.

The principle of making the national convention paramount failed to allow the JSP to curb its dependence on organized labor but certainly succeeded in reducing the influence of Diet members. Leftist union members, and particularly Socialist Association adherents, were most enthusiastically involved in increasing the number of party members and expanding local organizations. They became predominant in local branches, allowing their delegates to overwhelm right-wing delegates at the convention.

Thus the views of Diet members did not automatically hold sway over party policy making. In the 1970 convention, for instance, the Socialist Association proved to be the dominant force; in rivalry with the Sasaki faction, it accounted for more than 70 of the 385 delegates, with few Diet members included. The centrist Katsumata faction, in contrast, could only claim about 20 delegates, despite the fact that it accounted for the largest number of Lower House members, 22, of any of the factions (Fukunaga 1996, 272-274).

In conclusion, the JSP adopted mechanisms that favored left-wing unions and radical activists. Its emphasis on the national convention as its main decision-making body and the decision to deny automatic representation privileges to Diet members allowed left-wing activists to determine party policies through their overrepresentation at the convention.

STEERING TOWARD THE RIGHT

The JSP's "1986 Manifesto" marked a watershed in its shift from being a party of resistance to being a more realistic party. The manifesto was a product of the movement for political realism that began back in the early 1970s. As early as 1970, JSP Secretary-General Eda Saburō, who led the largest moderate faction, started to look for a way to

collaborate with Kōmeitō (Clean Government Party) and the DSP. With the idea of a JSP-Kōmeitō-DSP coalition, Eda ran for party head and challenged the left-biased Narita leadership in the convention of November 1970, but he was defeated by a substantial margin. Eda's second challenge was also unsuccessful. He attempted to pass a resolution concerning the establishment of a JSP-Kōmeitō-DSP coalition government in the convention of January 1972, but the convention-managing committee rejected his proposal before the convention.

During the election campaign of December 1972, the Narita leadership publicized as a counterproposal the idea of a coalition government formed by all the opposition parties. Given the antagonism between Kōmeitō and the DSP on one hand and Kōmeitō and the Japan Communist Party on the other, it was most unlikely that all the opposition parties would form a coalition. The Narita leadership presented the idea only for the purpose of containing Eda's moves toward collaborating with Kōmeitō and the DSP. Eda's efforts over the years yielded little but criticism from other party members and verbal abuse at the national convention held in 1977. A defeated Eda subsequently left the JSP to establish a new party. Unfortunately, however, poor health left him little time to accomplish his goals; he passed away in May 1977.

Eda's attempt over nearly two decades to make JSP policies more flexible and realistic finally bore fruit after his death, when the party officially approved the JSP-Kōmeitō-DSP coalition strategy. The JSP concluded an agreement on eventually forming a coalition government with Kōmeitō in 1980, in which the JSP admitted that joining a coalition would necessitate reconsideration of its basic stance on such issues as opposition to the Self-Defense Forces, the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, recognition of the South Korean polity, and nuclear energy.

Revision of the positions stated in "Road to Socialism" had been under way since 1978. The Ishibashi leadership, formed in 1983 with the slogan of making the JSP a "responsible party," precipitated the review process and finally abandoned "Road to Socialism" philosophy with the adoption of the 1986 Manifesto at the January 1986 convention. The 1986 Manifesto brought an end to the interminable debates in prior years over whether the JSP was a class-based party or had a broader orientation, by defining the JSP as a national party. It also implicitly supported Western European-style social democracy by proclaiming as its goal the pursuit of an alternative to traditional, Soviet-style socialism (communism). The JSP explicitly announced

its intention to adhere to European-style social democracy at the 1990 convention; accordingly, at the next convention the party decided to announce its official English name as the Social Democratic Party of Japan.

An internal struggle in the party served as a trigger for change and helps to explain why the party departed from its earlier Marxist principles. As it gradually amassed power, to the extent that it appeared to be a "party within a party," the Socialist Association began to cause tension and conflict with other established factions. The Sasaki faction, which was once the patron of the Socialist Association, most seriously suffered from the group's unilateral political activity. Consequently, in the 1970s, the Sasaki faction approached an old enemy, the Eda faction, to form an anti-Socialist Association front. Sasaki's rejection of the Eda group's JSP-Kōmeitō-DSP coalition overture made it impossible to consummate their union, but anti-Socialist Association sentiments peaked with Eda's death, just after he left the party in despair.

The unified front against the Socialist Association included both leftist and rightist factions. During party reform initiatives conducted between 1977 and 1978, they urged the Socialist Association to promise to confine itself to theoretical activities. The party then reintroduced the privilege that allowed Diet members to automatically qualify as delegates to the convention, since it was commonly felt that granting greater power to local activists tended to favor the Socialist Association. Entering the 1980s, the cohesion and integrity of the Socialist Association weakened. An internal schism formed between hard-core Marxists and social democratic converts, which brought about the defection of several leading scholars from the association in 1984. In the following year, charismatic leader Sakisaka Itsurō passed away, and in 1987 about 40 of 50 central secretaries left the association. Accordingly, the Socialist Association lost its hegemony in the 1980s, although it retained substantial influence over decision making mainly through the local chapters.

Behind the decline of the Socialist Association was the waning strength of the leftist labor movement, which experienced a turning point in the year 1975. In that year's spring wage offensive, the leftist Sōhyō, which called for higher wage raises, was overwhelmed by a unified front formed by the LDP government, employers' associations, and moderate unions, which had forged a consensus to restrain wage increases. Another fatal blow to Sōhyō was the failure of its "strike to

regain the right to strike" in the autumn. The Council of Public Workers' Unions, the group at the core of Sōhyō, called a large-scale illegal work stoppage for eight days demanding their right to strike, but they were unable to wrest any concessions from the government. This strike, held during a time of economic stagnation, was sharply criticized by both the mass media and private-sector unions. The strike's poor reception enabled the government to maintain an unyielding stance on the issue; the government later sued the unions involved for compensation.

The decline of the leftist Sōhyō enabled moderate labor groups, such as Dōmei (Japan Confederation of Labor) and the IMF-JC (International Metal Workers' Federation-Japan Council) to initiate a movement toward greater union confederation. Sōhyō-affiliated unions individually joined forces with the moderate labor movement. In 1989, private- and public-sector unions jointly established a new confederation, Rengō (Japanese Trade Union Confederation), which brought together the former national federations in a moderate unified front.

Indicative of the power shift within Sōhyō was the decline of Kokurō (National Railway Workers' Union) and the rise of Zendentsū (All-Japan Telecommunications Workers' Union). Kokurō was fatally injured when it fought an all-out battle against the privatization of the Japanese National Railways (JNR). The ensuing inequitable deployment of Kokurō members and anticipated unfairness in their reemployment at the newly privatized railway companies caused Kokurō membership to plunge sharply. Kokurō, which once boasted 250,000 members, had lost almost three-quarters of its members by the time JNR was broken up and privatized in 1987. Two years later, Kokurō held only 30,000 members.

Like Kokurō, Zendentsū initially opposed plans to privatize its employer, the Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Public Corporation (Denden-kōsha). As soon as union leaders realized that it would be nearly impossible to reverse the trend of privatization, however, Zendentsū shifted its strategy from resisting privatization to opposing a breakup of Denden-kōsha lest its organization be divided along company lines. This strategy enabled Zendentsū to collaborate with management and thereby to successfully reverse the government's plan to dismantle the monopoly. This achievement enhanced Zendentsū's prestige and influence within Sōhyō. The chairman of Zendentsū, Yamagishi

Akira, was thus able to take the initiative among Sōhyō-affiliated union leaders in steering the group toward merging its national organization with Dōmei and bringing about a transformation of the JSP.

Pressure from the moderating Sōhyō defined the subsequent course of the JSP. The adoption of a noncommunist coalition strategy, the review of "Road to Socialism" and the adoption of the 1986 Manifesto were all requested by union leaders. Asukata Ichio, JSP chairman between 1978 and 1983, later recollected that against his own wishes he directed the party to take a moderate line, in accordance with Sōhyō's demands (Asukata 1987).

After the ratification of the 1986 Manifesto, the JSP's next task was to modify its traditional stance of constitutional pacifism. Labor's influence was again obvious here. In January 1987, prior to the annual convention, Yamagishi and his associates from major unions organized a gathering to promote a new path for the JSP, requesting that the JSP and the DSP reach an historical reconciliation to establish an anti-LDP, noncommunist coalition government. To this end, Yamagishi called for a review of the JSP's basic policies, constitutional pacifism in particular. Despite labor union pressure, however, the review of constitutional pacifism made little progress until a non-LDP coalition government was formed in 1993. If, as was often claimed, the JSP/SDPJ was nothing more than labor's political arm, such a delay would not have occurred. The JSP/SDPJ resisted labor's requests and continued to hold to constitutional pacifism, in spite of the fact that moderate labor increased its influence with the birth of Rengō in 1989. How best can we explain such autonomy?

For one thing, it should be noted that constitutional pacifism was much more deeply rooted than Marxist philosophy in the JSP. Even while "Road to Socialism" functioned in practice as the JSP's platform, Marxist principles were occasionally challenged by party moderates. But party members had reached consensus on backing constitutional pacifism by the 1960s, and the philosophy became the backbone of the JSP, providing the party with cohesion and unity. Naturally, it was more difficult for the party to relinquish constitutional pacifism than Marxist principles.

Doi Takako, who succeeded Ishibashi Masashi as head of the JSP in September 1986, played a decisive role in delaying the review of constitutional pacifism. She rejected it by repeatedly emphasizing at

party conventions the importance of preserving the Peace Constitution-based status quo and maintaining the principle of unarmed neutrality. When Doi was chosen as chair, she was famous as a champion of constitutional pacifism. She was nonetheless selected as a compromise candidate by competing factions, which did not expect her to become a strong leader because she neither had her own faction nor belonged to a major faction. Contrary to such expectations, however, she gained popularity as the first female JSP head and a leader able to give straightforward messages, such as strongly opposing the introduction of the 3 percent consumption tax.

Doi's popularity led the JSP to an historic victory in the 1989 Upper House election. The JSP gained 46 of the 126 contested seats, leaving the LDP, with 36 seats, far behind. The LDP retained its status as the largest party by securing 109 seats in the Upper House, though the number of seats was far less than the 127 needed for a majority. The JSP was still on an upward trend in the 1990 Lower House election. It gained 136 seats, increasing its share of the vote from 17.2 percent in the previous election to 24.4 percent. The JSP's impressive performance in two consecutive elections enhanced Doi's authority and prestige. Doi's weak power base within the party was offset by her popularity outside the party, enabling her to decline labor's request to review the party's stance on constitutional pacifism. It was ironic that Doi took advantage of her popularity to forestall adoption of more "realistic" policies, considering that Doi's supporters were concerned mainly with lifestyle issues, including taxes (see Kobayashi 1991).

The remaining strength of party leftists played a decisive role in the party's decision to cling to constitutional pacifism. Given Doi's strong support among leftists, her effective leadership can be easily understood. Dogmatic leftists who had not joined Rengō had consistently resisted Sōhyō's rightward swing. The most influential leader of this group was Iwai Akira, who steered Sōhyō toward the left as its secretary-general from 1955 until 1970. Iwai and two other former Sōhyō leaders established the Labor Research Center in 1982 to mobilize leftist unions to oppose Sōhyō's rightward move. In 1989, in an effort to counter the emergence of the moderate Rengō, Iwai and his associates organized Zenrōkyō (National Liaison Conference of Trade Unions). Iwaware Sukio, who worked as Doi's right-hand man, acted as Zenrōkyō's representative within the party.

Zenrōkyō, with a membership of 500,000 workers, was no match

for Rengō, whose affiliated union members totaled eight million. Nevertheless, Zenrōkyō maintained substantial influence within the JSP. It was estimated that by the early 1990s about a third of the party membership belonged to or sympathized with Zenrōkyō. Its strength was demonstrated during the election for party head held in July 1991, after Doi stepped down to take responsibility for a poor showing in the unified local elections held in April. Tanabe Makoto, then-secretary-general and the leading figure among the moderates, was expected to win a sweeping victory with the support of Rengō, but he won by a much smaller margin than predicted. Ueda Tetsu, who was backed by Zenrōkyō and who advocated maintaining the constitutional pacifism plank, gained 30 percent of the total vote, only nine points behind Tanabe.

The vote reflected the continuing bias toward Zenrōkyō owing to the party's emphasis on the national convention as its primary decision-making organ. Since local branches were guaranteed a strong say in the institutional pattern of decision making, especially at the convention, local leftist stalwarts were able to resist the policies and will of the central leadership. Consequently, at the convention where Tanabe was chosen as the new leader, a proposal for the review of constitutional pacifism drafted by a Tanabe-led committee was rejected.

Debates over the peacekeeping operations triggered by the outbreak of the Persian Gulf crisis in the summer of 1990 sparked antiwar sentiment by the still leftist-leaning party. Ironically, Tanabe, a champion of the right wing, had no choice but to accede to this antiwar opinion. He eventually found himself in a difficult position, as the party leadership adopted a stance of unyielding opposition to dispatching Self-Defense Forces overseas under any conditions. That decision scotched the prospect of further negotiations on forming a coalition with Kōmeitō and the DSP, as those two parties favored collaborating with the LDP to support Japanese peacekeeping operations.

Lastly, it is important to note that Rengō's enormous power resources were not mobilized effectively to exert influence over the JSP/SDPJ. As basically an amalgam of unions with different ideological and policy orientations, Rengō was neither capable of having a unified political view nor capable of undertaking political activity. Ex-Sōhyō affiliates and ex-Dōmei affiliates were in confrontation over political issues, including national security, social security, and nuclear energy policies. Rengō head Yamagishi's actions therefore were not based on

a Rengō consensus. He received his greatest support from ex-Sōhyō affiliates, but ex-Dōmei affiliates were also in agreement on the necessity of reconciliation between the DSP and the JSP.

IMF-JC leaders, on the other hand, were skeptical about Yamagishi's commitment to the JSP. Miyata Yoshiji, then chair of the IMF-JC as well as president of Tekkō Rōren (Japan Federation of Steel Workers' Unions), and his successors, including Washio Etsuya, head of Tekkō Rōren, and Tokumoto Teruo, chairman of the Confederation of Japan Automobile Workers' Unions, insisted that organized labor should keep political parties at arm's length and should mobilize its power when labor-related policies are placed on the political agenda. To this end, the most effective step, they believed, would be to establish a two-party system by introducing single-seat electoral districts. Whether or not the Socialists would be able to be one of these two parties mattered little to them (Watanabe 1994, 434-442). Washio says: "A conventional way for labor to influence politics is by establishing an affiliation with a political party, but by doing so organized labor has weakened its power. This is why the new Rengō was organized. Although President Yamagishi's activities give the wrong impression that Rengō is committed to a specific party, Rengō's basic policy is to collaborate with various political forces on a case-by-case basis, after examining individual policies" (Honzawa 1997, 245).

To sum up, an assumption that the JSP/SDPJ was dominated by the policy preferences of organized labor fails to account for the party's adherence to constitutional pacifism despite pressure from labor. Constitutional pacifism was so deeply imbedded in the JSP platform as its most widely shared philosophy that leftist members at the party's local branches were able to effectively shelve its review by taking advantage of the primacy of the party convention in JSP decision making.

THE SUDDEN DEATH OF CONSTITUTIONAL PACIFISM

In order to complete the JSP/SDPJ's transformation to becoming a "realistic" party, it was essential that reformers breach the party's institutional barrier, by modifying the "convention-first" rule of decision making in such a way as to enhance the power of the Diet members. In the early 1990s, the JSP/SDPJ carried out a series of revisions of party rules to this end, deciding that the national convention would be held

every second year instead of every year, the Diet committee system would be introduced as a shadow cabinet, the appointment of organizers would be abolished, and the party rules would be appended with an explicit statement that the general meeting of both the Upper and Lower House members would be their supreme decision making body. These revisions, however, made no substantial changes in the actual management of the party.

The institutional pattern of party convention dominance in decision making finally dissolved with the start of the coalition era. The LDP's seemingly unending grip on political power abruptly ended with its split in 1993 after a string of political scandals. In the Lower House election of July 1993, the LDP gained only 223 seats, short of a majority of 256 of the 511 seats, and the idea long-cherished by the SDPJ of a non-LDP government suddenly looked plausible. The SDPJ itself, however, with only 70 seats secured in the election, having lost almost half of its preelection seats, lacked the wherewithal to take the lead among the opposition parties.

Instead, the initiative for forming a coalition was taken by newly created conservative/centrist parties, including the New Party Saki-gake and the Japan New Party. They proposed that party support for a single-seat district system combined with proportional representation be a prerequisite for joining a non-LDP coalition. The SDPJ accepted the proposal immediately because party leaders were convinced that participating in a non-LDP coalition government was in the best interests of the electorate.⁵

The decision was noteworthy not only because it meant that the SDPJ had changed its long-standing opposition to the single-seat district system, but also because the party's central leadership exercised unusual discretion in deciding such an important issue. They obtained only *ex post facto* consent from ranking members, including a gathering of Lower House members and an extraordinary meeting of the Central Executive Committee. In a national meeting of local secretariats on July 27, 1993, the leadership succeeded in authorizing the Central Executive Committee to decide coalition government-related matters.

Henceforth, the leadership was able to act relatively independently of the party's leftist forces. The SDPJ leadership signed an agreement forming the non-LDP Hosokawa coalition government on July 29, 1993, that included the suggestion of continuity between the previous

LDP government and the new government as concerned basic policies. The agreement implied that established policies concerning national security, defense, external affairs, and nuclear energy would remain unchanged. All these decisions were endorsed at the national convention of September 1993.

The SDPJ, however, while a part of the Hosokawa government, had yet to amend its pacifist principles. Socialist ministers in the Hosokawa cabinet professed that they considered the Self-Defense Forces unconstitutional as SDPJ members, but as cabinet members they of course respected the coalition agreement. In the LDP-SDPJ-Sakigake coalition government formed on June 30, 1994, the Socialists were no longer able to use that argument, since their leader Murayama was selected to preside over the cabinet as prime minister.

In order to make the party's stance consistent with established government policy and to assume responsibility for leading the government, Murayama decided to relinquish the party position on constitutional pacifism. In his first speech to the Diet as prime minister, on July 18, 1994, Murayama expressed his intention to maintain the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty and to accept as necessary a minimal number of defense forces. The Central Executive Committee of the SDPJ subsequently endorsed Murayama's statement.⁶

Murayama recollected his historical decision to transform party policies as follows: "It would have been better if the decision had resulted from open debate within the party. In that case, the policy change would have been more warmly accepted. There was no time for that, however, since I was elected as prime minister by chance, with no preparation whatsoever. At that time, I firmly resolved that I would resign as prime minister if my decision was rejected at the convention" (Murayama 1996, 63).

In the convention held in September following this about-face, dissatisfied leftists were furious, as expected. Secretary-General Kubo Wataru weathered the storm of dismay by asserting that as prime minister Murayama could not have expressed views that differed from government policy. The SDPJ, therefore, must adjust its stance to conform to government policy to fulfill its obligations as the prime minister's party. Kubo later confessed that "the decision received *ex post facto* approval only because Murayama was prime minister. If he had been just another Socialist leader, he would have been ostracized immediately after his statement."⁷

In conclusion, strong leadership was needed to overcome institutional resistance to abandoning the stance of constitutional pacifism. Strong leadership, however, was all but impossible given the party's institutionalized pattern of decision making in which basic policies had to be endorsed at a convention where leftists still maintained substantial power. The SDPJ's conventional pattern of decision making left the party little room to make drastic changes.

This rigidified pattern was weakened, however, when the party leadership gained discretionary power in the turmoil following the 1993 election. Their authority was strengthened by Murayama's appointment as prime minister to the extent that the leader was able to discard a fundamental party position without the prior consent of party members.

FAILURE TO MOBILIZE NEW POWER RESOURCES

Soon after Murayama's resignation as prime minister in January 1996, the SDPJ changed its name to the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and revised its rules and platform at its convention as a first step toward becoming a new nonconservative party. A small number of hard-core leftists defected before the convention to form the New Socialist Party. According to the predominant view that the SDPJ's stagnation had been caused by its leftist policies, its turnabout should have opened the door to a new, golden era for the SDP. Contrary to these expectations, however, the majority of SDP members moved to the newly formed Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) and the SDP survived the Lower House election of October 1996 as a minor party holding only 15 seats out of 500.

How best can we explain the gap between expectations of restored party glory and the reality? The JSP/SDPJ's rightward swing was an attempt to expand its constituency, to mobilize new power resources. The party's fall, therefore, meant that its attempt had failed, basically because of two major factors: party strategy and fundamental changes in the electoral system. This fifth section deals with the first factor, and the sixth section discusses the latter.

Social Democracy

The JSP/SDPJ's decision to reposition itself as a social democratic party raises questions about how useful social democracy is for mobilizing

power resources in Japan. Social democracy has achieved full-fledged development in places where organized labor is powerful enough (that is, the unionization rate is reasonably high and centralized labor organizations span varied enterprises and localities) to counterbalance market-oriented forces. Japan obviously lacked such conditions. The nation's unionization rate remained at about a third of its total labor population from the 1950s to the mid-1970s. The rate has declined consistently since then, and currently hovers close to the 20 percent mark. Centralization is weak as an effect of enterprise-based unions, as these unions operate independently from higher-level umbrella organizations.

Whereas in most social democracies confederated labor unions tend to request income redistribution and welfare provisions through government policy, Japanese enterprise-specific unions typically call for wage raises, improved working conditions, and welfare provisions within their individual enterprises. Wage earners try to improve their living standards by enhancing business performance in cooperation with company management. The Japanese style of labor-management relations, therefore, discourages wage earners from organizing themselves across enterprise lines. The common strategy of social democratic parties of mobilizing support by improving working conditions and national welfare through government policy is unlikely to appeal to workers, at least to employees in large firms, who constitute the majority of organized labor.

It should be noted furthermore that Western social democratic parties, which had promoted the welfare policy since the 1960s, lost their popularity by 1980, as many industrialized countries faced huge financial deficits caused by the oil crises in the 1970s. The Keynesian effects of social democratic policies on domestic demand were negated to a considerable extent by the impact of economic globalization. Neo-conservatism asserts that the aggrandized state deprives the private sector of financial resources, thereby causing economic stagnation. The social democratic welfare state is also criticized on moral grounds, in that excessive welfare services make people lazy and dependent upon the state. Regardless of the validity of these criticisms, the conventional style of social democracy certainly lost its attractiveness to many in the 1980s.

Had the SDPJ taken a serious approach toward introducing social democracy in Japan, it would have discussed the problems and

limitations faced by Western social democracies and it would have presented a new version of social democracy tailored to Japan's specific circumstances. What the JSP actually did was to condemn Marxist-Leninist ideologies and blindly applaud Western-style social democracies (see Ōuchi 1989; Fukuda and Tanaka 1988). This may have been a necessary strategy to take to emerge victorious from intraparty conflict, but to defend Western-style social democracy against Marxism in the 1980s was a questionable approach as far as voters were concerned. Nobody cared about Soviet-style socialism by that time except for hard-core ideologues. The claim of being "better than Russian socialism" did not appeal much to the general public.

An old Socialist made an insightful comment on the strategy of unifying social democratic forces just before he passed away: "Rengō president Yamagishi has referred to social democracy for years. But what he has said merely means 'non-LDP and anti-JCP [Japan Communist Party],' as if everyone but LDP and JCP supporters were the supporters of social democracy. Social democracy is presented as something left after rejecting the LDP and the JCP, without a clear vision of what social democracy is or its basic policies. It is, therefore, easy [for him] to move on to something else" (Shimizu 1995, 388).

A Lost Identity

Another strategic failure was in policy development by the Murayama cabinet. Since the SDPJ had tried to appeal to voters in the previous election by participating in a non-LDP government, it was critical for the SDPJ to legitimize forming a coalition with the LDP and thus overcome the relative unpopularity of the Murayama cabinet by introducing policies that demonstrated a strong new identity. The Murayama cabinet, however, failed to present policies that were distinguishable from those of previous LDP governments, although it was able to resolve some old issues with statements apologizing for former government actions, such as a statement of remorse for the nation's behavior during World War II and a statement expressing regret to those who suffered from Minamata disease, an illness of the nervous system caused by mercury dumped by a chemical company in Minamata Bay in Kumamoto Prefecture in the 1950s.

I would like to cite two specific examples of the Murayama cabinet's policy failures, in the areas of social security and new postindustrial policies. The first has been known as the province of social democrats

and the second as an area where social democrats can potentially take a leading role.

SOCIAL SECURITY To what extent were the social security policies of the Murayama cabinet different from those of previous LDP governments? The SDPJ released an interim report entitled "The Welfare Program from the Welfare Society in Post-World War II to Welfare Policy in the 21st Century" in May 1994, one month before the start of the Murayama government. It was noteworthy because it contained arguments directly opposed to LDP-led retrenchment on welfare programs. Its essence can be summarized as follows:

A society that guarantees the elderly freedom of choice and independence is a system in which individuals can lead independent lives with the help of universal social services when necessary. The central pillar of this system is public services, complemented by self-help programs and voluntary organizations. Shifting the burden from the public sector to the individual will increase social costs tremendously, due to the enormous expenditure of energy and time required of caretakers in the home and the cost of excluding them from the labor market.

It is misleading to assume incompatibility between social security and economic growth. Pensions and family assistance increase the purchasing power of the elderly. Social security expenditures promote business expansion in the fields of medical care, care for the elderly, and child care, thereby creating jobs. Improvements in social security, moreover, create an environment in which workers can work with peace of mind. Social security pays for itself by facilitating economic growth with new benefits. (Nippon Shakaitō 1994a, 4-22)

This report was undoubtedly targeted at the neoconservative backlash against welfare at the time. It is unclear, however, to what extent the ideas expressed in the report were reflected in social policy development during the Murayama era. The Murayama cabinet's most significant achievement in this field was the adoption of the New Gold Plan, aimed at increasing manpower and facilities for care for the elderly. However, this was basically an upgraded version of the Gold Plan

that had been formulated by the Ministry of Health and Welfare in 1989; it simply expanded the established policy, displaying little sign of Socialist initiative.

The government's revision of the pension scheme appeared to contradict the original stance of the JSP/SDPJ. The party had been opposed to a raise in the pensionable age from 60 to 65 for company employees, as proposed by the LDP government since the late 1970s. The JSP/SDPJ agreed to the proposal, however, once it joined the government. The pension reform bill passed the Diet during the Murayama administration.

The SDPJ made its case in a commentary on the pension reform bill, asserting that increases in social expenditures under the current pension scheme would become too burdensome for future generations (Nippon Shakaitō 1994b, 21). This argument, however, is far from persuasive because the party had criticized this very line of reasoning for so long. The commentary caused raised eyebrows about other assertions as well, such as its claim that increased employment should be a prerequisite for raising the pensionable age, even though this is unlikely in the current economic recession. The SDPJ's reasoning seemed to make little sense in terms of policy rationale. Its acceptance of raising the pensionable age appeared above all to be a concession to the LDP in order to stay in power.

NEW POLITICS Whereas social welfare is an area in which social democrats have traditionally had the upper hand, "new politics," concerning postindustrial values, or issues that arise in a maturing, post-industrial society, are often considered to be a field in which social democrats may gain an edge over neoconservatives. Often included under the "new politics" rubric are such issues as environmental protection, feminism, minority rights, consumer rights, and participatory democracy. To what extent did the JSP/SDPJ exercise its leadership in this field?

The passage of the Promotion of Local Autonomy Law, designed to promote local autonomy, during the Murayama administration can be seen as a result of continuing efforts by the SDPJ. The law closely resembled a report that the party's shadow cabinet had drafted in the autumn of 1992, in collaboration with scholars and younger elite bureaucrats. The SDPJ widely distributed copies of the report, with the

aim of encouraging local assemblies to call for greater decentralization. In June 1993, the SDPJ proposed a resolution on promoting local autonomy, which unanimously passed the Diet.

As visibly active as the SDPJ was, however, the fact that all parties except the JCP supported the idea of decentralization made it difficult to assess the importance of the role the SDPJ played. According to Ishihara Nobuo, then deputy chief cabinet secretary, the promotion of local autonomy was authorized in a cabinet meeting because of strong support for it voiced not only by SDPJ ministers but by LDP and Sakigake ministers as well, although it was not included in the day's agenda.⁸

The party's promotion of nonprofit organizations (NPOs) was noteworthy in terms of citizen involvement in politics. Voluntary relief activities in the Kobe area after the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake of 1995 helped increase public awareness of a bill that would facilitate NPO activities by making it easier for the organizations to incorporate. The Murayama government submitted its NPO bill in late 1996. In the meantime, the New Frontier Party, which had been established in late 1994 by the merger of the DSP, the Japan New Party, the Japan Renewal Party, and the Kōmeitō, had already submitted its own NPO bill three times. As was the case with decentralization, no major parties voiced opposition to the idea of an NPO bill.

Among the ruling parties, Sakigake, not the SDPJ, was most active in this issue. The party publicized a research report on the activities of nonprofit groups in December 1994, before the Kobe earthquake, in response to requests from a citizens' group. When the LDP attempted to revise a bill in such a way as to strengthen bureaucratic supervision and control over NPOs, it was Sakigake that pushed for the draft to be rewritten in its original form.

In the field of environmental protection, the SDPJ's moves were disastrous in terms of power resource mobilization. The SDPJ had long been supported by environmentalists and environmental citizens' groups owing to its consistent opposition to nuclear energy and industrial pollution. Along with relinquishing constitutional pacifism, however, the SDPJ altered its pro-environmental stance by accepting the use of nuclear energy as a transitional energy source.

Soon after this policy switch, the occurrence of some accidents at nuclear power stations during which accurate information was suppressed by the nuclear energy authorities greatly increased public anxiety about nuclear power. Against this backdrop, a pivotal event took

place on August 4, 1996, when a majority of the residents of the small town of Makimachi in Niigata Prefecture rejected, via a plebiscite, construction of a nuclear power station. Taking these events into account, it can be said that the SDPJ abandoned its antinuclear energy stance just when it had become attractive and possibly useful for mobilizing popular support.

More awkward and damaging were the SDPJ's dealings regarding the construction of an estuary dam in Nagara River in Mie Prefecture. The dam issue had already become politically sensitive by the time the Hosokawa government was formed. Understanding the political risks involved, the Socialist minister of construction, Igarashi Kōzō, took a prudent stance: He let the dam be constructed on the condition that its operations be suspended. Nosaka Kōken, another Socialist minister of construction in the Murayama cabinet, was neither as sensitive nor cautious as Igarashi. He declared on May 22, 1995, in accordance with advice from bureaucrats, that the government would start full-scale operations of the Nagara River dam. His decision met with nationwide criticism. The party's image was severely damaged by extensive mass media coverage of a hunger strike protesting the Nagara River dam. Igarashi recollected, "When we relinquished constitutional pacifism, we didn't receive a single protest call at headquarters. But the telephone bell did not stop ringing for a while after Nosaka's decision. It was said that the mishandling of the Nagara River dam issue resulted in cutting the SDPJ's votes in half. We in the SDPJ paid scant consideration to what today's citizens take seriously."⁹

It must be concluded from the above cases that the SDPJ failed to find a way to mobilize new power resources during the Murayama administration.

EFFECTS OF THE NEW ELECTORAL SYSTEM

Another important influence on the party's ability to mobilize power resources was the new electoral system of the Lower House. The relatively low proportion of the vote required to gain a seat under the prior multiseat district system had enabled the SDPJ to remain the largest opposition force by depending on labor and appealing to the leftist electorate.

The party's failure to broaden its constituency was not a serious drawback under the multiseat district system, because it could count

on labor to secure the second largest bloc of seats in the Lower House. This conventional wisdom, however, could not be applied to the new electoral system, which featured 300 single-seat districts. Without gaining substantial new power resources, the SDPJ was expected to suffer a disastrous setback, losing in most single-seat districts and unlikely to gain anywhere close to half of the 200 proportional representation seats, given its highest share of the vote to date, 20 percent (the 24.4 percent share the party recorded in the 1990 election was considered exceptional and attributable to then-Chairperson Doi's popularity).

This argument was often cited during moves to create a new party within the SDPJ starting in 1994. Former party head Yamahana Sadao and his associates organized an intraparty group, the New Democratic Coalition, to pursue possibilities for forming a new non-LDP government in the near future. Secretary-General Kubo sympathized with the Yamahana group and voiced his intentions to form a new party by mobilizing social democratic and liberal forces. Chair Murayama counterbalanced that idea with his proposal of integrating the SDPJ and Sakigake into a single party. When all these attempts failed, the SDPJ lost the chance to form a new party under its initiative. As a result, each Diet member was later presented with the need to decide whether or not to join the non-Socialist DPJ.

It remains a puzzle as to why the SDPJ accepted the electoral system reforms despite its perception that the introduction of a single-seat district system would be to its disadvantage. The SDPJ formerly voiced opposition to this kind of electoral reform whenever it was proposed by the LDP. Why not in 1993? Given the political circumstances of the time, in which the multiseat district system was criticized as a main cause of political scandals and corruption and all other parties except for the Communists supported revising the electoral system, a Socialist leader recalled, the SDPJ was unable to take a strong, unilateral stand against the change.¹⁰

By regarding a non-LDP government as the supreme objective, the SDPJ acquiesced to the single-seat district system without much deliberation. This stance received strong backing from Yamagishi Akira, the president of Rengō. By early 1993, however, shortly after conflict surfaced between the SDPJ and Kōmeitō-DSP about the issue of peace-keeping operations, thwarting efforts to realize a joint social democratic strategy, Yamagishi had shifted his stance from establishing a social democratic unified front to creating a non-LDP coalition. To this end,

he now collaborated with a champion of neoconservatism, Ozawa Ichirō, secretary-general of the Japan Renewal Party, which had been formed by LDP defectors.

Similar as it might appear, the idea of a non-LDP coalition is quite different from a merger of social democratic forces. Both proposals posit that the unification of non-LDP (and anti-JCP) forces is necessary to promote a shift of power in Japan that will lead to a more mature democracy. The non-LDP coalition proposed by Ozawa, however, implied a system of two conservative-leaning parties; his alternative to the LDP was not social democratic but conservative in its basic stance. Yamagishi's original concept of an SDPJ-Kōmeitō-DSP coalition was apparently incompatible with Ozawa's vision. The thinking of the IMF-JC union leaders echoed Ozawa's perspective, and they actually tried to collaborate behind the scenes. Yamagishi thus jumped on the bandwagon for forming a non-LDP coalition as a preemptive move, to contain his potential rivals and reconfirm his leadership.

Yamagishi felt forced to accede to the introduction of single-seat districts, even though he likened the process to being served a "poisoned sweet," implying that its slow-working poison would fatally injure the SDPJ later on. To neutralize the poison, he asserted, the parties joining the coalition government should help each other and form a unified front against the LDP in single-seat districts (Yamagishi 1995a; 1995b). He did not hide his distrust in Ozawa, however, and doubted that they could cooperate for long. And with the coalition government looking unlikely to last, it was questionable whether Yamagishi's antidote would be attainable.

The "Murayama initiative" adopted at the convention of January 1994 demonstrated the inability of the SDPJ to think outside the traditional paradigm of a multiseat district system. It stated that the SDPJ would work to forge a pluralistic party system, in which the party would take the initiative in forming a coalition government with the goals of social justice and solidarity. The plurality referred to by the SDPJ is most likely to emerge from proportional representation voting. In order to form a government, however, the SDPJ and its potential allies would also have to win a majority in single-seat districts, which account for 300 of the total 500 seats. If the SDPJ seriously hopes to win among single-seat districts, its proposed pluralistic party system is unlikely to be maintained, because, without unifying themselves, the SDPJ and its allies have no chance to command a majority.

In short, the SDPJ's conventional electoral approach was totally inapplicable to the new electoral system that the party had accepted, but it lacked a clear vision about how to proceed or a strategy for its own survival.

CONCLUSION

The JSP/SDPJ, once known as a "perpetual opposition party," finalized its rightward shift with the surrender of constitutional pacifism in 1994. Two major changes lay behind the SDPJ's transformation to being what was regarded as a "realistic" party. The first concerned organized labor. Leftist union forces suffered setbacks in the 1975 spring offensive as well as in the "strike to regain the right to strike" that shifted the balance of power in favor of the moderates. Rivals of Sōhyō, such as Dōmei and the IMF-JC, came to play leading roles in the spring offensive and the unification of labor organizations in the late 1970s. A power shift took place within Sōhyō as well, as moderates gradually overwhelmed the influence of left-wing unions. Decisive was the fall of Kokurō, the leading left-wing union, in the mid-1980s. By the late 1980s, the weakened leftists had few means by which to challenge the moderate-led forces for labor affiliation.

The changes in organized labor were naturally reflected in the policies of the heavily labor-dependent JSP. In parallel with Sōhyō's rightward shift, the JSP started a review of its party platform, expressed in the 1964 report "The Road to Socialism in Japan." It is misleading, however, to assume that leftist elements in the JSP were neutralized with the party's adoption of the 1986 Manifesto. Leftist influences remained strong enough to prevent the party from modifying its basic advocacy of constitutional pacifism.

Although the leftists became a weakened, minor force in the labor movement, they retained substantial power within the JSP thanks to the primacy placed upon the national convention as the party's principle decision-making body. This approach brought about an institutional pattern of decision making that increased the power of local chapters and rank-and-file members and limited the leadership potential of Diet members. Through their dominance at the local-chapter level, leftists were able to achieve overrepresentation in decision making at party conventions.

The second major change had to do with the political disorder that

arose when the LDP's long-term dominance came to an end. The SDPJ leadership was able to increase its discretionary authority in order to deal with the rapidly changing political situation in the coalition era. With the appointment of party head Murayama as prime minister, the leadership's range of discretion expanded to such an extent that it was able to overthrow the basic party stance of constitutional pacifism.

The swing to the right was based on the assumption that the SDPJ would prosper as a ruling party if it reversed its leftist orientation. When the SDPJ finally did so, however, the party split and weakened to become a minor party. How had it erred? First of all, social democracy was ill-suited to the Japan of the 1980s as a strategy for mobilizing popular support. Social democracy was losing its luster in most advanced capitalistic nations at that time, as neoconservatism gained wide acceptance as a fundamental policy. The idea of social democracy proposed by the JSP, after all, implied achieving reconciliation between the JSP and the DSP as part of a unification of "anticommunist, non-LDP" forces. The party was unable to present any forward-looking policies that would recast it as a party of the future.

During the coalition era from 1993 to 1998, the SDPJ finally abandoned constitutional pacifism, but it was unable to find an alternative for its dependence on labor that would allow it to mobilize new power resources. Even in an administration led by a Socialist leader prime minister, the SDPJ was unable to forge a new identity, thereby causing it to appear to be little more than a "second LDP."

The party's failure to mobilize new power resources would not have been so serious had the multiseat district system remained unchanged. The new single-seat district system with proportional representation, however, did not allow the SDPJ to enjoy a comfortable second-place position by depending upon organized labor, as it always had. When the SDPJ failed in an attempt to form a new party, the bulk of the party's membership fled to the centrist DPJ.

NOTES

1. Since the 1940s, the official name in English of the Nippon Shakaitō had been the Social Democratic Party of Japan. However, the English name Japan Socialist Party (JSP) was commonly used. At its party convention in February 1991, the JSP announced that its official English name was the Social Democratic Party of Japan (SDPJ). The SDPJ changed its English name to the Social

Democratic Party (SDP) in January 1996. Following custom, we use the JSP in referring to the party in this chapter. When the party is referred to from an historical perspective, it is called the JSP/SDPJ.

2. Constitutional pacifism means to advocate unarmed neutrality based on the pacifistic stance expressed in the Japanese Constitution. The Constitution's Article 9, also known as the "peace clause," renounces "war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as a means of settling international disputes" and bans the maintenance of "land, sea and air forces, as well as other war potential."

3. Throughout this chapter, descriptions of the JSP rely mainly on the following three books: Nippon Shakaitō (1986; 1996) and Iizuka, Uji, and Habara (1985).

4. The left-wing factions in the early 1950s based their pacifist stance on what was called the "four peace principles": a "total peace" (that is, a peace pact with all the former Allied Powers), refusal to allow foreign troops to be stationed in Japan, permanent neutrality, and no rearmament. The leftists were opposed accordingly to the San Francisco Peace Treaty and the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty of 1951, and the introduction and expansion of the Self-Defense Forces. The right-wing factions in the party favored the Peace Treaty as a first step in Japan's reentry to the international community, but they opposed the Security Treaty.

5. As stated to the author in an interview with former Prime Minister Murayama Tomiichi on February 14, 1997.

6. The meeting proceeded as if the SDPJ was trying to deny its past; party leaders unhesitatingly accepted Japan's commitment to peacekeeping operations within constitutional limitations and nuclear energy as a transitional energy source. Furthermore, they recognized the sun flag and the traditional anthem "Kimigayo," which the JSP formerly criticized as symbols of Japan's prewar militarism, as the national flag and national anthem, respectively.

7. Interview with Kubo Wataru on May 27, 1997.

8. Interview with Ishihara Nobuo on February 15, 1997.

9. Interview with Igarashi Kōzō on February 17, 1997.

10. Interview with Kubo Wataru on February 15, 1997.

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