

USJI Seminar

**Differences of Policy Formulation Processes in Japan and U.S. Parliaments:
Roles of Cabinet, Government Official, Lobbyist, Parliamentarian and Think Tanks.**

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**Abundance of Lobbyists in the United States and
Absence of Lobbyist in Japan:
Policy Formulation Processes in Two Countries**

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Our Interests in Lobbyists

- We wondered why **many lobbyists exist in DC**, while we have **few lobbyists in Tokyo**.
- Such difference seems to stem from **differences in policy formulation processes** in the United States and Japan.

It is presumably because:

- “**Compulsory adherence to a party decision**” is applied for most of voting in Japan. All the Party members must vote according to the decision by the Party, not by their own judgments.
- Government officials (almost exclusively) draft laws in Japan [i.e. **Bureaucrats-led Politics**].

Aim and Method of Our Research

- Identify the reasons why only Bureaucrats-led Politics works in Japan, as compared with Politicians-led Politics in the States.
- Find out prerequisites to make Politicians-led Politics work in Japan, which are lacking in the existing system of policy formulation, through a comparative study with the U.S. system.
- Consider if/how lobbyists may emerge in Japan.
- Carry out interviews with politicians and bureaucrats in Japan, as well as with lobbyists in the U.S.
- Solicit comments and criticism by U.S. experts on our findings and opinions (thus we are here today).

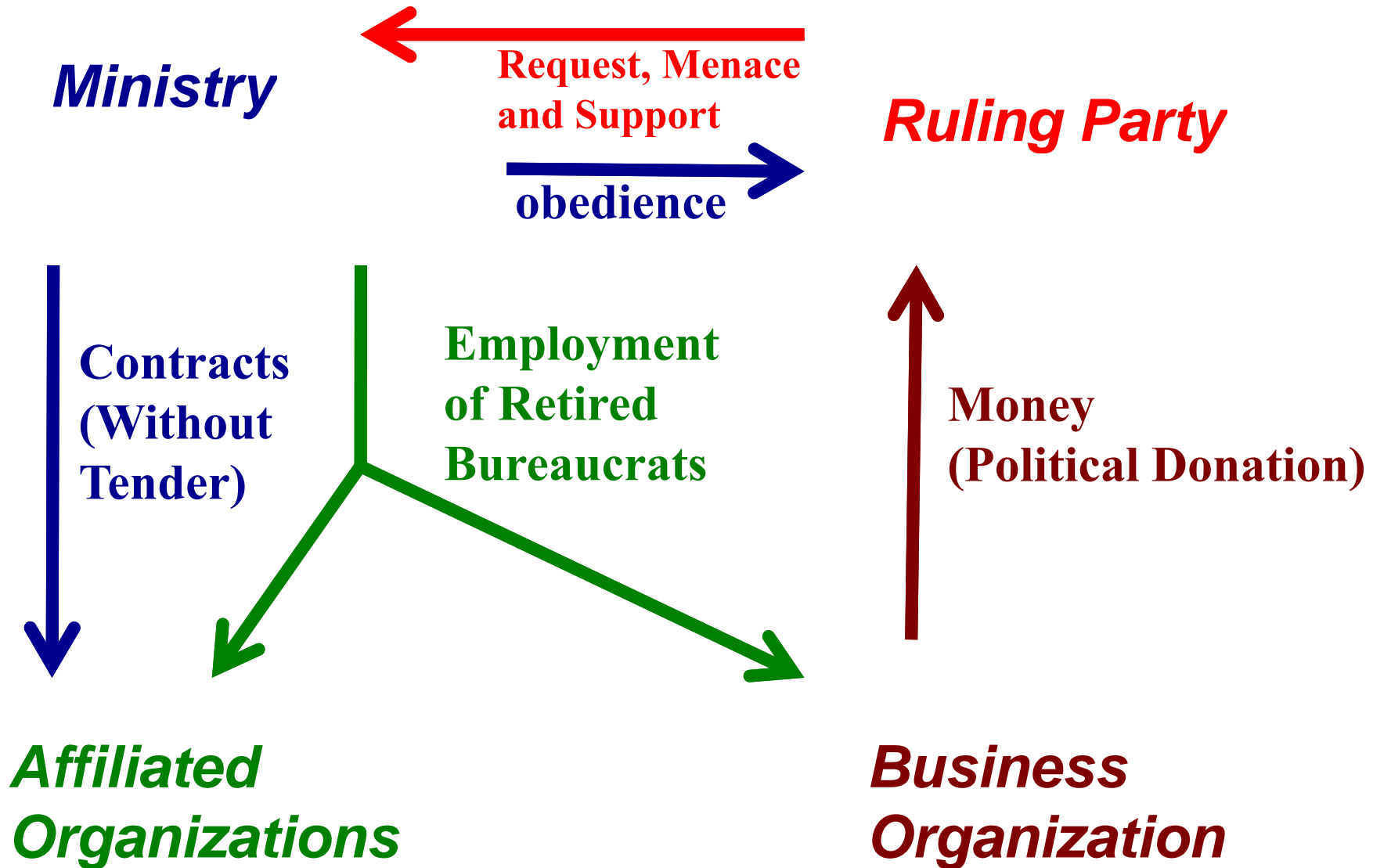
Politicians-led Politics advocated by DPJ (when DPJ came into power in 2009)

- It had been felt that that fundamental changes were needed to revitalize “stagnant” Japanese economy and society.
- Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) came into power in 2009 by the “landslide” victory in election by advocating “change”.
- New Prime Minister Hatoyama said that his administration will “create a new Japan with **politicians-led politics.**”
- It implied that conventional **bureaucrats-led policies**, advocated by the previous ruling party of LDP (Liberal Democratic Party), should be abandoned.

Implications of Bureaucrats-led Politics (claimed by mass media and DPJ)

- Government officials in Japan are (in practice) under “lifetime-long employment” system, in which **their post and income are secured even after retirement** from ministries.
- They thus work **for the interest of their ministries**, not necessarily for the interest of the Japanese people.
- They strongly object to attempts (“conspiracies” from their point of view) to abolish or weaken the power of their ministries.
- Making drastic **“structural change” to administrative organs** is thus **impossible** and “old regime” remains untouched.

Vested-interest Structure



From Bureaucrats-led to Politicians-led

(What DPJ did after coming to power)

Weekly meeting of Administrative Vice-Ministers (top of the bureaucrats) was abolished

→ Law making became stagnant, for traditional arena for negotiation among ministries to develop laws was lost.

→ Meeting of the same nature was established in 2011.

Politicians-led “Screening out wasteful government projects” Committee was established

→ “Public execution” of wasteful projects was done as a show.

→ Committee however had no legal authority to “execute” projects and many of once “executed” projects were revived by ministries.

Why Bureaucrats were “sniped” by DPJ?

- Bureaucrats are regarded as “**bad men**” in the mind of citizens, probably influenced by mass media and TV dramas.
- High-ranking bureaucrats, “best and brightest” in Japan, are **envied and detested**.
- DPJ symbolized the “change” to Politicians-led Politics, **by excluding the bureaucrats from policy formulation**.
- “**Screening out wasteful government projects**” **Committee** was once regarded as a hero in Samurai movies.

Failure of Politicians-led Politics by DPJ

- Many pledges in DPJ's manifesto (for the election in 2009) were not met.
- The DPJ Government failed to address many important political issues, such as relocating US military base in Okinawa.
- Bureaucrats-led system was partly (or largely) revived to address the issues created by the Great East Japan Earthquake.

Why Politicians-led Politics failed to work?

Hypothesis 1

- Failure was merely **due to lack of the leadership** by the new DPJ administrations. Bureaucrats will do whatever ministers order. Ministers should have demonstrated their leadership. The fatal failure was that the new administration excluded the bureaucrats from policy formulation rather than having ministers give strong orders to the bureaucrats. Bureaucrats simply follow the order of “do nothing without order by politicians”.

Hypothesis 2

- Bureaucrats were **beyond control by the new administration**. They are only keen to keep interests of their ministries. Moreover, they knew that the DPJ administration would not last long. They thus superficially obeyed to the new administration.

If the Hypothesis 2 is the case...

Evidently:

- Politicians-led Politics may not be materialized **merely by avoiding bureaucrats from policy making processes.**
- **Politicians can not draft laws** (with the existing systems).
- **Bureaucrats monopolize “information” and “agenda”.**

Thus:

- **Capacity of Politicians should be enhanced**, to the extent they can draft laws (with assistance of others) with reliable sources of **“information” and “agenda”.**
- Bureaucrats should be **subject to Politicians.**

How and by whom laws are developed in Japan

- Bureaucrats-led politics works in Japan because ministries are equipped with “information” and “agenda” to draft laws.
- Government officials are extremely skillful to draft laws. Research institutes under ministries carry out researches to provide ministries with information needed to draft laws.
- The majority of laws enacted have been proposed by the Cabinet, not by politicians. These laws were drafted by ministries.
- Politicians lack the skill to draft laws by themselves, let alone “information” and “agenda”. Mechanisms to help politicians in drafting laws do not exist.
- Legislative Bureaus of Houses of the Diet is supposed to assist politicians in their drafting laws, while it lacks capacity to draft laws.

Enhance Capacity of Politicians to Draft Laws

- “Information” and “agenda” should be provided by unbiased and neutral research institutes, such as think tanks, rather than ones owned by ministries. (Robert McNamara in early 1990s suggested that independent think tanks be established in Japan, while it is not materialized yet.)
- Research and Legislative Reference Bureau of the National Diet Library should be enhanced. (US CRS has some 400 researches, while the Bureau only has 70 or so researchers.)
- Cabinet Legislation Bureau should be independent of ministers in terms of its staff members (i.e. ministries presently have their own “spies” in the Bureau.).

Make Bureaucrats subject to Politicians

Posts in a Ministry (after 1999)

Minister

Senior Vice Minister

Parliamentary Secretary

Administrative Vice Minister

Director General

Director

Vice Director

Section Chief

Officer

- Introduction of “political appointment” system for **Administrative Vice minister, Director General and Director.**
- It will **open the Pandora’s box**, in that motivation of carrier bureaucrats will be significantly degraded and quality of work of the ministries will be deteriorated.
- “Political appointment” may not be compatible with “lifetime-long” employment system.

May Lobbyists Exist in Japan?

- Discarding the “Compulsory adherence to a party decision” should lead to emergence of lobbyists (perhaps along with Power Martini), while **it will open another Pandora’s box** (e.g. endless arguments about raison d’être of political parties).
- In case politicians will draft laws by themselves (without assistance or intervention by bureaucrats). lobbyists may serve as sources of “information and agenda” for politicians, so that politicians can make a distinction **between (unbiased) information and (biased) agenda.**

U.S. Lobbyists once had a success in Japan

U.S. products were shut out of the Japanese market due to “non-tariff barrier”.

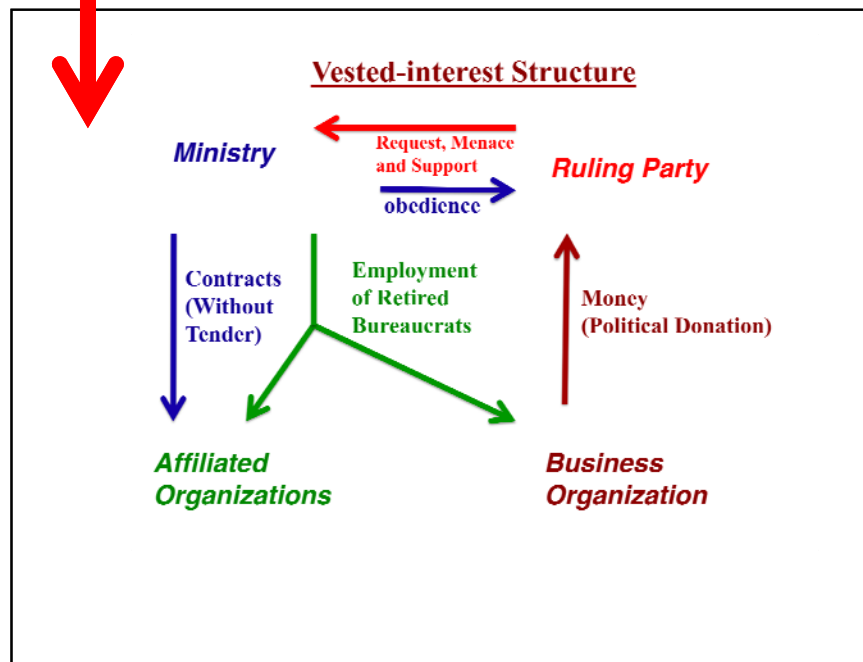
“U.S. Position” was presented to high-ranking government officials through seminars.

Why and how it worked?

- High-ranking government officials are sick and tired of “irrational” requests and menaces by the ruling party.

- They are intelligent and wish to behave “rationally”.

- “U.S. Position” sounded more rational and government officials changed their behavior (to some extent.)



Thank you very much!



Go for it Japan! Stay strong Japan!!