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"Global Perspectives on Japan" focuses on developing a global perspective on the study of Japan and Asia. The journal promotes innovative, interdisciplinary, inter-regional and transnational approaches to Japanese Studies.

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# An Elite Analysis: Reimagining LDP's Factions, 1955-1993

## Yalın Akçevin

(Boğaziçi Unversity)

Factions (派閥 – habatsu, both characters meaning faction, lineage, and clique) have been conspicuous in discussions about the organization and functioning of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and how power is wielded within the party, acting both as blessing and curse for the party. On the one hand, factions allowed for the internal divisions and conflicts of the party to be managed through formal organizations and warded off splits. On the other hand, factions have been essential in putting the party's and its members' power and resources to work by organizing them into functional units. When the party was formed in 1955, there were six factions all formed around a particular leader, who were Yoshida Shigeru, Hatoyama Ichirō, Ōno Bamboku, Ogata Taketora, Miki Takeo, and Kishi Nobusuke.<sup>1</sup> Although the numbers have been subject to change and eventual stabilization in the following years, these early factions were the basis of all later factional lineages within the LDP.

While factions of the LDP are commonly described as "apolitical" organizations, as McCubbins and Thies note this has never been put to a vigorous test, despite indicators that intraparty changes and circulation are the sources of policy change within the LDP.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the perception of apolitical factions comes from analytical frameworks that are oft used but

<sup>1</sup> Steven R. Reed. *Japan Election Data: The House of Representatives, 1947-1990.* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Center for Japanese Studies, 1992), p. xx.

<sup>2</sup> McCubbins, Mathew D., and Michael F. Thies. "As a matter of factions: The budgetary implications of shifting factional control in Japan's LDP," *Legislative Studies Quarterly* (1997), pp. 295, 299.

never truly proven. In addition, although this position is backed up by numerous scholars, many are only repeating the point made earlier by others. Much of the existing literature on the LDP's factions falls into two broad categories. First are the cultural approaches such as Nakane Chie's "vertical society" and *oyabun-kobun*<sup>3</sup> relationship or Edward Olsen's – and the Japanese press' – take that factions are an anachronic holdover from Japan's feudal past, which see political factionalism as a reflection of Japanese culture on politics.<sup>4</sup> Second are the functional-structural approaches,<sup>5</sup> which focus on political structure or function to explain factionalism in the LDP. The analyses of Haruhiro Fukui, J. A. A. Stockwin, and Nathaniel Thayer can be seen here, emphasizing the Japanese electoral system between 1955 and 1993, and the LDP's party presidential elections as sources for the existence and powerful positions of political factions.<sup>6</sup>

Per these approaches, factions have very little to no impact on LDP's policymaking. Scholars such as Shinoda, Krauss, Pekkanen, and Stockwin claim that factions are not built basis on ideology or policy, only that they "provide necessary alternatives for the leadership position" as Shinoda writes.<sup>7</sup> They convey the consensus that the LDP's factions were geared towards political survival and career politicians, and that they were apolitical organizations. However, the way this apolitical status is justified leaves a series of questions unanswered. How is it possible to claim that factions provided leadership alternatives if they were not politically differentiated? Without such differences, where did the changing platforms and agendas

<sup>3</sup> 親分-子分, translated as boss-henchman or foster parent-foster child.

<sup>4</sup> Chie Nakane, *Japanese Society* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1972), pp. 50, 59; Olsen, Edward A. "Factionalism and Reform of Japan's Liberal Democratic Party." *World Affairs*. 141 (1978), pp. 260, 263; Totten, George O., and Tamio Kawakami. "The functions of factionalism in Japanese politics." *Pacific Affairs* 38, no. 2 (1965), p. 109.

<sup>5</sup> Broad category I am putting forward here to simplify the discussion by combining several different analyses that are in the same vein.

<sup>6</sup> J. A. A. Stockwin, Governing Japan: Divided Politics in a Resurgent Economy, 4th ed. (Malden, MA.: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), p. 140; Ellis S. Krauss and Robert Pekkanen, The Rise and Fall of Japan's LDP: Political Party Organizations as Historical Institutions (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), p. 108; Nathaniel Bowman Thayer, How the Conservatives Rule Japan (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), pp. 21, 35.; Haruhiro Fukui. Party in Power: The Japanese Liberal Democrats and Policy-Making. (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1970), pp. 100, 133.

<sup>7</sup> Tomohito Shinoda, *Leading Japan: The Role of the Prime Minister* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2000), p. 11; Krauss and Pekkanen, p. 109; Stockwin, J. A. A., "Factionalism in Japanese political parties," *Japan Forum*, vol. 1, no. 2, (1989), p. 169.

of the LDP originate from? How could the factions that manage the day-today political affairs of the LDP remain apolitical? Furthermore, if Japan is to be understood as a sophisticated democracy, what must the analyst make of the implication that the voters are not sophisticated at all and vote based on pork? As can be seen, the existing literature has pitfalls that chip away at the claim that factions are apolitical and personalized political machines. Since these approaches tie every change to external conditions or political structures, in a sense they argue that Japanese politicians have no control over Japan's direction and are in constant crisis management. Furthermore, by obscuring the many inputs that shape Japan's political landscape, they reduce the goal of Japanese political actors to simple survival.

This situation raises the question of whether the LDP's factions can be identified as politically involved organizations when approached differently, especially from an analytical framework that has a broader scope and responsiveness to a broader field of evidence that takes into account the human factor in politics. As such, I intend to employ elite and Weberian theories, which can be much more holistic in scope and how they approach the question of factions by looking at effects coming from culture, structures, and humans. The use of these theories is also important to turn the discussion of Japanese politics away from explanations that are Japan-centric or normative regarding factions and factionalism, to a more universalistic and descriptive position. Furthermore, elite theories are rather underused in analyses of Japanese politics with many works copying a pattern that can be found in Albrecht Rothacher's "The Japanese Power Elite" that uses the term "elite" to mean "powerful and/or privileged" and focuses on "politics, big business, and bureaucrats"8 without any actual theoretical discussion.9 In my analysis, I intend to make use of Gaetano Mosca's work in "The Ruling Class" describing the rise of factional organizations within elite groups, the idea of intraparty oligarchy put forward by Robert Michels in "Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy", and Weber's classical

<sup>8</sup> The so-called "iron triangle" is often at the center of "elite analyses" of Japanese politics. There is usually no use of actual elite theory in any of these analyses, apart from a loose connection to the framework C. Wright Mills developed in his "*The Power Elite*". As such it would be better to classify these kinds of studies as "power-network analyses".

<sup>9</sup> Albrecht Rothacher. The Japanese Power Elite. (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1993).

categorization of authority along the lines of charismatic, bureaucratic, and traditional authority.<sup>10</sup> Through this analytical framework, I will be arguing that the factions of the LDP are political elite organizations, that participate in intra-party policymaking and have individual policy inclinations, yet are also involved with snagging the party presidency and the prime ministry.

#### The Leader and the Faction

Faction leaders provided leadership, funding, endorsements, and appointments to the members of their factions.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, faction leaders were also involved with recruiting new members to their factions and the party, as they labored to get the necessary votes to become party president and Prime Minister.<sup>12</sup> Recruitment to the faction was the first point where the faction leader had the power and choice in imparting his political leanings and outlook onto the faction. As McCubbins and Thies point out since the faction leader was involved with the recruitment of new members so intimately – depending upon the blessing of the leader – he had the power to ensure that the person being recruited is of the proper political material.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, policy coherence could be induced after a Dietmember joined a faction through factional socialization.<sup>14</sup> Given that a faction had to be stable enough to be lead and cohesive enough to be relied upon in political dealings, there was a premium placed on recruiting members whose political profile fit that of the leader and the faction. Furthermore, since the leader sought to obtain and maintain the loyalty of his faction members for as long as possible, loyalty

<sup>10</sup> Gaetano Mosca, *The Ruling Class*, ed. Arthur Livingston, trans. Hannah D. Kahn (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1939); Robert Michels, *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*, trans. Eden Paul and Cedar Paul (1915; repr., Eastford, CT: Martino Fine Books, 2016); Max Weber, *The Essential Weber: A Reader*, ed. Sam Whimster (New York, NY: Routledge, 2003).

Masaru Kohno. Japan's Postwar Party Politics. (Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 102-103; Tomohito Shinoda. Contemporary Japanese Politics: Institutional Changes and Power Shifts. (New York, NY: Columbia University Press), 2013, pp. 31-32; Fukui, Party in Power, p. 130; Thayer, How the Conservatives Rule Japan, pp. 30, 35.

<sup>12</sup> Kenji Hayao. *The Japanese Prime Minister and Public Policy*. (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1993), p. 106; Fukui, *Party in Power*, p. 128; Krauss and Pekkanen, *The Rise and Fall of Japan's LDP*, p. 101.

<sup>13</sup> McCubbins and Thies, p. 318.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 318.

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based on like-mindedness and not a contractual relationship was important. A leader that was able to gain a following based on policy preferences and political outlooks was bound to find it easier to secure loyalty, as long as he did not betray commonly shared political ideas.

Apart from their ability to set the tone of factional policy preferences and political outlook at the time of recruiting members, leaders also could impart their visions to their faction through their daily contact with members and the exercise of leadership. Thayer has observed that this occurred as each leader imparted a certain "flavor" to their faction at the level of policies rather than ideologies.<sup>15</sup> In effect, the factions went through differentiation in terms of policy preferences and political outlooks through socialization, which took place through daily leader-member relations. This differentiation was constrained within the broader conservative ideological outlook of the party, in which the factions operated as competing elite organizations. Ultimately, what emerged was a faction with a particular political leaning, which could be easily identified with that of the leader, and acted as a policyrelevant actor. However, it should also be noted that at the end of the process of differentiation and socialization, the policy preferences of the leader and the faction he led were nearly indistinguishable from one another, as they shaped and were shaped by each other. To talk about the agenda or policy preferences of the faction in turn became equal to talking about the agenda or policy preferences of the leader -or the Prime Minister- and vice versa.

On this point, Bouissou has written that "all faction leaders have some preferred policies. To advance these policies, the faction leaders want to build the strongest possible *habatsu*" (emphasis in original).<sup>16</sup> Thus, Bouissou reconceptualized factional size as a tool with uses beyond party politics and party presidential elections, with an impact on policymaking as directed by the leader which controls the votes and personal energies of the faction. However, it is important to note that a leader was not necessarily able to sway his factional following to his side if they did not share their political positions wholeheartedly. In effect, when leaders sought to build the strongest faction possible to support the pursuit of their preferred policies, there had to be

<sup>15</sup> Thayer, How the Conservatives Rule Japan, pp. 46-47.

<sup>16</sup> Bouissou, Jean-Marie. "Party factions and the politics of coalition: Japanese politics under the "system of 1955"," *Electoral Studies* 20, no. 4 (2001), p. 596.

an agreement with their factional following to form the necessary consensus behind these policies. These had to be the preferred policies of the faction, as much as that of the leader, if they are to find adequate support from the faction. In this manner, a leader who could impart his policy preferences and political outlook on his faction could then use the faction as a tool to pursue these policies.

Of the factions which existed between 1955 and 1993, observations can be made, showing how they have been differentiated from one another on policy matters, based on the personal leanings of the leaders and recruitment patterns of the members. It should once again be noted here, these factions have ultimately stayed within the conservative camp and that an analysis of their policy differentiations would not necessarily place them on a leftright scale, which Bouissou notes as lacking scientific evidence to do in any concrete manner.<sup>17</sup> However, other classifications can be made exploring the relative positions of factions to each other within the conservative spectrum that appears as occupying a space from the center to the far-right. These classifications include the pursuit of dovish or hawkish politics; being part of the Yoshida School or the Revisionists; and having an ex-bureaucrat or pure politician leader and makeup, amongst others. In some factions, policy patterns were kept intact between leaders whilst in others priorities shifted between leaders who -if the leader became party president and Prime Minister– had a chance to influence national politics.

One important factional lineage is the *Kōchikai*<sup>18</sup> faction, whose leadership includes Ikeda Hayato (PM, 1960-1964), Ōhira Masayoshi (PM, 1978-1980), Suzuki Zenkō (PM, 1980-1982), and Miyazawa Kiichi (PM, 1991-1993). Kōchikai was a largely ex-bureaucrat dominated faction that is part of the so-called "conservative mainstream", with a particular focus on financial affairs.<sup>19</sup> The name of the faction was drawn from a Han dynasty Chinese poem by Ma Rong, and was given to the faction by scholar and power broker Yasuoka Masahiro, which also made a wordplay on Ikeda's name as both

<sup>17</sup> Bouissou, p. 584.

<sup>18</sup> 宏池会/Broad Pond Society. Prime Minister Kishida Fumio leads the Kōchikai faction.

<sup>19</sup> Thayer, *How the Conservatives Rule Japan*, 46; Thayer, Nathaniel B. "The election of a Japanese prime minister," *Asian Survey* 9, no. 7 (1969), p. 477; Bouissou, p. 584; Farnsworth, Lee W. "Challenges to Factionalism on Japan's Liberal Democratic Party," *Asian Survey* (1966), p. 504.

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included the same character 池 meaning pond.<sup>20</sup> Thus, the faction name served to subtly denote its founding leader, which was carried on as the name of the faction persisted, and gave the faction itself an air of distinction as the name was drawn from Chinese poetry and invoked certain poetic imagery.

All leaders of the *Kōchikai*–except Prime Minister Suzuki whose background was in fisheries administration– had once worked as bureaucrats in the Ministry of Finance (MoF) and later also served as Ministers of Finance. The faction enjoyed a bureaucratic certainty in its leadership successions and had a pool of expertise that it could always rely on, especially in financial matters. Here, Ikeda's "income-doubling plan" for the sixties was an important manifestation of the factional leanings towards financial policies. Moreover, men like Ikeda and Suzuki had their administrations geared towards the calming of factional and electoral tensions which had erupted before them, with  $\overline{O}$ hira being the exception as Suzuki had risen to the challenge of sedating the conflict his tenure had left behind. Moreover, the *Kōchikai* was part of the Yoshida school, since the revision of the postwar order did not emerge as an important policy issue and economic policy remained the top concern.<sup>21</sup>

A second factional lineage, which was part of the conservative mainstream, was that of Prime Minister Satō Eisaku (PM, 1964-1972), succeeded by Tanaka Kakuei (PM, 1972-1974), and Takeshita Noboru (PM, 1987-1989) initially named the *Shūzankai*<sup>22</sup> and changing to *Mokuyōkurabu*<sup>23</sup> under Tanaka (1972), and to *Keiseikai*<sup>24</sup> under Takeshita (1985).<sup>25</sup> Each name reflected the particular sensibilities of the leader. *Shūzankai* referred to Satō's roots in feudal Japan as his hometown of Tabuse was located in the Suō province<sup>26</sup> which used the same character  $\mathbb{B}$ , denoting the leader of the faction and his origins as

<sup>20</sup> Haruto Matsumoto, "自民党総裁選ビジネスにも通ずるエピソード [LDP Presidential Election - Episodes That Also Leads to Business]," 日経BizGate, September 17, 2021, <u>https://bizgate.nikkei.</u> <u>co.jp/article/DGXMZO7568575012092021000000</u>; Keita Ozawa, "なぜか「宏池会」が大流行左派含 め与野党問わず標榜本家の岸田政調会長は困惑 [Why Is the Kōchikai so Popular]," Sankei Shimbun, November 28, 2017, <u>https://www.sankei.com/article/20171128-PFS4B4CJLRMYJE32HVSL-NAHMNQ/</u>.

<sup>21</sup> Zakowski, Karol. "Kochikai of the Japanese Liberal Democratic Party and Its Evolution After the Cold War," *The Korean Journal of International Studies* 9, no. 2 (2011), pp. 184-185.

<sup>22</sup> 周山会/Suō Mountain Group.

<sup>23</sup> 木曜クラブ/Thursday Club.

<sup>24</sup> 経世会/Economics and Society Group.

<sup>25</sup> Bouissou, p. 584; Farnsworth, p. 504.

<sup>26</sup> 周防国/Suō no kuni.

the descendant of Chōshū men who made modern Japan. *Mokuyōkurabu* reused an older name of the Satō faction, allowing Tanaka –whose rise was a contentious affair– to legitimate himself by drawing upon the roots of the faction which he led. *Keiseikai* combined two important political ideas that Takeshita pursued, social rebuilding and economic reform, and placed the new emphases of the faction onto the name itself.

All three men served as Prime Minister. In their backgrounds, Satō was a bureaucrat, Tanaka was a businessman, and Takeshita was a teacher before starting their political careers in the LDP and each man had different policy dispositions from one another. Respectively, Satō was a political jack-ofall-trades, Tanaka had ties to the construction industry and brought both political pork and money politics into the mainstream, and Takeshita was a political powerhouse, which reflected in their tenures as well. Sato won the return of Okinawa to Japanese sovereignty in 1971 and normalized relations with Korea in 1965, Tanaka focused on the normalization of relations with China in 1972 and the proposed "remodeling of the Japanese archipelago", and Takeshita's accomplishment was the successful passage of Japan's first consumption tax in 1988. It is interesting to note that this factional lineage has acted as a powerhouse that has had members whose expertise could stretch to many subjects, which reflected both the political disposition of its founder Sato and mimicked the development of the LDP into a catch-all party. It should also be noted that all three men were part of the Yoshida School, in that they did not seek to redraw the postwar settlement, although Sato and Tanaka did work to improve its conditions by the return of territory and opening relations with China.

The third factional lineage which was a part of the conservative mainstream was the  $T\bar{o}kakai^{27}$  originally headed by the hawkish Kishi Nobusuke (PM, 1957-1960), who was succeeded by Fukuda Takeo (PM, 1976-1978) who renamed the faction to *Seiwakai*.<sup>28</sup> The name  $T\bar{o}kakai$  most likely reflected the founding or meeting date of the faction, whereas the name *Seiwakai* –which combined the characters for purity 清 and peace 和– reflected the Japan-centric nationalism of the faction, gave it the imagery of political cleanliness,

<sup>27</sup> 十日会/Ten Days Group.

<sup>28</sup> 清和会/Seiwa Group; Bouissou, p. 584.

and referenced springtime which could have been taken as a nod towards the goal of restoring Japan to its glory after World War II that the faction held dear. Both Kishi and Fukuda were able to become Prime Ministers. Kishi was a foreign policy hawk, a pure politician, and a member of the Revisionists, whose greatest crowning achievement towards the unmaking of the postwar settlement came with the 1960 revision of the US-Japan Security Treaty towards a more equitable position. Fukuda himself was an ex-bureaucrat from the MoF and a foreign policy hawk like Kishi, although tempered by the changing events such as the Japan-China normalization process. It can be seen that the Satō and Kishi lineages had one key similarity and one key difference between them. On the one hand, both factions tended to include men whose backgrounds and expertise were diverse, which was reflected in the faction itself. On the other hand, whilst the Satō lineage was a part of the Yoshida School, the Kishi lineage consisted of Revisionists.

Kono faction was another important lineage, initially called the Daiichi Kokusei Kenkyūkai<sup>29</sup> or the Shunjūkai.<sup>30</sup> The Shunjūkai originally had a focus on the agricultural policy under Kono Ichiro and later when Nakasone Yasuhiro (PM, 1982-1987) took over as faction leader in 1965 - and its name became *Seisaku Kagaku Kenkyūjo*<sup>31</sup>– he pursued "hawkish" foreign policy goals.<sup>32</sup> The names reflected the different directions of the faction under its two leaders. The name Shunjūkai drew upon the rice cultivation seasons of Japan, in spring and autumn of the year, and Kono's connections with agricultural interests. In contrast, the name Seisaku Kagaku Kenkyūjo reflected Nakasone's deep involvement with policy matters across the spectrum, and the faction's expanding scope as it became involved with more than just agricultural issues. Both Kono and Nakasone were professional politicians and both came from outside the conservative mainstream, but only Nakasone and his lieutenant Uno Sōsuke (PM, 1989) were able to become Prime Ministers.<sup>33</sup> Both men brought their particular outlooks to bear onto the faction, with Nakasone especially being vocal about pursuing a more active foreign policy and

<sup>29</sup> First National Policy Study Group.

<sup>30</sup> 春秋会/Spring and Autumn Society; Farnsworth, p. 504.

<sup>31</sup> 政策科学研究所/ Policy Science Institute.

<sup>32</sup> Thayer, *How the Conservatives Rule Japan*, 46; Bouissou, p. 584; Colton, Kenneth. "Japan's Leaders, 1958," *Current History* 34, no. 200 (1958), p. 230.

<sup>33</sup> Bouissou, p. 584.

revising the Peace Constitution to allow the remilitarization of Japan during his tenure as Prime Minister. As can be seen, Nakasone particularly was a member of the Revisionist group that sought to revise the postwar political and international situation of Japan by undoing the status quo which had emerged during the Occupation.

Ōno Bamboku led another one of the early LDP factions of considerable importance, called the *Hakuseikai*<sup>34</sup> or the *Bokuseikai*.<sup>35</sup> On the one hand, these two names called upon the image of clean and peaceful politics, which were Ōno's watchwords in his time in politics, especially during Kishi's turbulent tenure. On the other hand, especially the name *Bokuseikai* referred to Ōno's name, both sharing the character 睦,<sup>36</sup> which made the immediate connection between faction and leader. Ōno was a professional politician –whose career went back to the prewar period– and his involvement with politics, especially as a faction leader, stressed personal ties as Kōno once described it.<sup>37</sup> Although Ōno's faction –and his tenure– is not noted for any particular policy dispositions, his approach to politics can be seen reflected in the way he managed his faction. Being of a prewar make, Ōno's approach to politics was geared towards a more leader-follower type relation and the way he handled his faction reflected his overall political style.

A final important factional lineage that can be discussed is the *Seisaku Kenkyūkai*<sup>38</sup> headed by Miki Takeo (PM, 1974-1976), which came from outside the conservative mainstream and had an interest and engagement in policy and ideological matters from its inception.<sup>39</sup> Nicknamed "Mr. Clean" for his clean political record, Miki constantly called for party reform, which included calling for the dissolution of the factional system and measures against money politics.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, Miki had been active in policymaking since his entry to politics in the Imperial Diet as an independent in 1937, being a vocal voice for items such as cleaner, rationalized, and qualified politics in Japan and peaceful relations with the US. This predisposition of Miki in turn

<sup>34</sup> 白政会/White Politics Group.

<sup>35</sup> 睦政会/Harmonious Politics Group.

<sup>36</sup> This kanji can be read as either "haku" or "boku".

<sup>37</sup> Thayer, How the Conservatives Rule Japan, p. 46.

<sup>38</sup> 政策研究会/Policy Study Group.

<sup>39</sup> Fukui, 115; Bouissou, 584; Farnsworth, p. 504.

<sup>40</sup> Johnson, Chalmers. "Japan 1975: Mr. Clean Muddles Through", Asian Survey 16, no. 1 (1976), p. 31.

informed the functioning of his faction within the LDP, as a group that also had a similar interest in being active policy actors. This was reflected in the name of the faction *Seisaku Kenkyūkai* as well, which emphasized the policy involvement of the faction. Later, Miki was succeeded by Kōmoto Toshio in 1976, who renamed the faction to *Banchō Seisaku Kenkyūjo*<sup>41</sup> of which Prime Minister Kaifu Toshiki (PM, 1989-1991) was a member. The name change continued the original commitment to policy matters that this faction had from its inception, but also signaled a shift from politics of principle to politics of application, with the word "banchō" (番町) meaning community signifying this expansion.

Overall, it can be seen that the faction leaders had an immediate impact on the way in which their factions operated on a daily basis, became involved in policy issues, could be identified as having policy preferences, and the type of leadership which would potentially succeed them. The process of differentiation took allowed for a diversity of factional lineages to emerge. Some factions had a catch-all nature –similar to that of the LDP– which meant that the successive leaders brought different policy preferences, and the faction was able to handle such changes because it housed men of different leanings who could still be united behind singular goals, as they shared political outlooks. In some factions, leadership lineages could remain much more constant, with shared backgrounds, policy interests, and political outlooks linking succeeding leaders together. Finally, factions could also see a shift between one position and the other, where succession between pure politician leaders of outstanding character pushed the factional policy priorities in a different route.

## Identity and Solidarity in Factions

The recruitment process, in which faction leaders could enforce unity in policy preferences and political outlooks within their respective factions, by their control over the recruitment, was not a single-sided process dependent solely on the leader. Whilst the faction leaders were able to manage the recruitment process in a way so that they could ensure that members shared

<sup>41</sup> 番町政策研究所/Bancho Policy Research Institute.

their policy and political views, the members could also choose a faction that fit their existing policy preferences. After all, the process of entering a faction was not simply a process of finding a willing sponsor within the LDP and dedicating one's loyalty, in order to collect the factional benefits. Joining a faction also meant that the person in question was seeking and willing to wear a label associated with the faction and its leader, which allowed a given candidate to distinguish themselves from other LDP candidates competing in the same electoral district.<sup>42</sup>

To be associated with different factional groupings, although claimed to be not entirely distinguishable to the voters on the ground, did provide for differentiation of Dietmembers in a way that the media and the voters could identify.<sup>43</sup> Once a Dietmember –or candidate– joined a faction, the people that would support a candidate on the ground changed depending on which faction they joined.<sup>44</sup> This meant that the voters could associate a particular LDP Dietmember in their district with a specific set of prominent politicians, their preferred policies, and political records. This kind of information was widely available in the media, since faction leaders and lieutenants tended to be highly visible and influential figures that were on the news regularly, and voters had access to this information. Thus, to be a member of a faction such as Ikeda's *Kōchikai* or Kishi's *Tōkakai* would associate a Dietmember with the Yoshida School or the Revisionists. The voters would be able to judge the policy inclinations of the LDP Dietmember before them on key matters such as economics, diplomacy, and welfare, by using their factional credentials.

Furthermore, from interviews with LDP Dietmembers Sakata Michita and Kurogane Yasumi, Thayer also reported that factions did have political differences amongst themselves with members banding together not simply

<sup>42</sup> Thayer, *How the Conservatives Rule Japan*, p. 39; Cox, Gary W., Frances M. Rosenbluth, and Michael F. Thies. "Electoral rules, career ambitions, and party structure: comparing factions in Japan's upper and lower houses," *American Journal of Political Science* (2000), p. 117; Cox, Gary W., Frances McCall Rosenbluth, and Michael F. Thies. "Electoral reform and the fate of factions: The case of Japan's Liberal Democratic Party," *British Journal of Political Science* 29, no. 1 (1999), p. 35.

<sup>43</sup> McCubbins and Thies, p. 304.

<sup>44</sup> This difference in perception due to who the supporters are on the ground is still visible today. When he was assassinated on July 8, 2022, former Prime Minister Abe who was leading the largest faction in the National Diet, was giving one such support speech in Nara for Councillor Kei Satō, effectively tying Satō's name to his political platform.

because of experience and benefits, but also due to similarities in thinking.<sup>45</sup> Thus, whilst the choice of faction reflected the choice of factional identity that a given a candidate Dietmember sought to have and an incumbent did have, it also brought people of a similar political outlook together. In effect, the faction helped create a shared political identity for its members, which in turn fostered solidarity between them by allowing them to interact and commit to the same cause. A Dietmember that became a part of a faction, in which the members had a commonly shared political outlook, could ultimately rely on his fellow members to form a united block during policy discussions within the party.

In sum, factional membership entailed two processes that politicize factions and members, as factions brought LDP Dietmembers of similar dispositions together under the same organization. The act of joining an organization that brought Dietmembers together and combined their energies for political and electoral purposes led to the emergence of both factional labels in politics and solidarity between like-minded politicians. The former meant that Dietmembers were able to show voters their political credentials and policy inclinations, by appealing to their factional identity. Whereas the latter meant that factions were organizations of politicians that were of a similar make and could act in solidarity when intraparty policy discussions began.

## **Policy Discussion in Factions**

By the role they played in bringing politicians together, as well as their provision of actual meeting places such as offices and official meeting programs, factions created settings for Dietmembers to get together and discuss policy actively and openly, serving as "units of intra-party communication", although the leader remained the ultimate decision-maker.<sup>46</sup> Factions combined a degree of privacy along with a group of people whose policy positions were closely related to one another. Thus, members could discuss policy amongst themselves without turning it into a public debacle and the LDP could reach settlements on policy positions within itself.

<sup>45</sup> Thayer, How the Conservatives Rule Japan, p. 46.

<sup>46</sup> Gerald L. Curtis, *The Japanese Way of Politics* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1988), 88; Fukui, pp. 136-137.

This then made it easier for the party to present a united front to the public, having cleared policy discussions within itself beforehand.

Yet, it should be noted that the faction leaders had the power to guide discussions and shape conclusions emerging from any discussions among faction members. However, this should not be taken to mean that faction leaders tended to allow such discussion to proceed freely and then imposed their own decisions, despite what conclusion the members had reached. Although such action was not out of the question, it would have both run counter to the logic of factional leadership –necessitating constant control over the affairs of the faction– and might have introduced tensions within the faction. Thus, a faction leader was likelier to be a part of the discussion, actively participating in and directing it, and in the end casting the decisive vote.

Ultimately, the factions not only had policy positions of their own and provided assemblies for like-minded politicians, but they also facilitated intraparty discussions on policy. Although this was a managed discussion, privy and open to the faction members ultimately under the guidance of the leader, it did foster policy discussions within the LDP and brought the factions closer to policymaking.

#### Factions and the National Budget

A final demonstration of factional policy involvement is their impact on the national budget. The budget is the key piece of legislation that any administration must pass, which makes it an important indicator of policy involvement for any faction that influenced its contents. Although partyline voting on the budget was the norm in the Diet, the LDP first reached a compromise on the budget through intraparty discussions and then pursued solidarity in the Diet vote.<sup>47</sup> Thus, the budget was not a piece of legislation that the ruling faction or the factional coalition formulated and then pushed onto the party, offering positive incentives and threatening punishment to bring the factions into line. On the contrary, the budget was a piece of legislation produced through factional politics and the factions actively participated in its making, which made Diet voting easier for the administration, although

<sup>47</sup> McCubbins and Thies, p. 300.

incentives and punishments were available to ensure greater solidarity.

In analyzing the different budgets between 1956 and 1984, McCubbins and Thies conclude that the inclusion of different factions in the mainstream impacted the content and nature of policy in LDP administrations, which was reflected in the national budgets.<sup>48</sup> Their analysis focuses on a list of budget items, categorized as "pork", "public goods", and "semi-public goods" and they find that pork items are least affected, followed by semi-public goods and public goods in increasing amounts.<sup>49</sup> These results show that factional impact on the budget was driven by a focus on policy, not political survival. An increase in spending for pork and constituency services would not mean that factions had an impact on policy but rather that they sought to maximize the funds being channeled to their voters to ensure reelection. The fact that these spending items are not heavily affected shows that there was no haggling over pork spending when the budget was formulated and that the factional impact on the budget stemmed from other concerns. Thus, with the bulk of the spending changes happening in items considered to be public or semi-public goods, it can be seen that policy considerations came into play when factions began budget discussions. This leads to the point that the factions that were most closely involved with the making of the budget had policy preferences of their own and that they brought these preferences to bear down on the way in which spending for the next fiscal year was decided.

## Measuring the Factions through Theory

The Weberian theory is the key metric here, to make sense of the use of power and authority within the LDP's factions. It can be seen that the LDP's factions show a mixture of the three pure types of authority Weber has identified, the traditional, the bureaucratic, and the charismatic. With regards to legal authority, LDP's factions can be seen satisfying two conditions: high institutionalization and a hierarchy of authority.<sup>50</sup> LDP's factions, especially since the sixties, had become much more institutionalized, and boasted offices, secretaries, routine meetings, and even summer camps that gave the

<sup>48</sup> McCubbins and Thies, pp. 317-318.

<sup>49</sup> McCubbins and Thies, pp. 310-311, 314.

<sup>50</sup> Weber, pp. 133, 134.

factions a much more tangible form.<sup>51</sup> The faction took on the form of an organization unto itself, although it should be noted that they did not achieve the level of autonomy that the broader party had, but did become easier to identify, reach, and lead. Alongside institutionalization, the factions also rationalized their internal hierarchies, as the leader-dominated group came to possess a leading clique with the leader, his lieutenants, and the rest of the membership being placed in a hierarchy. Moreover, the seniority norm helped the factions to solidify their internal hierarchies, based upon objective criteria such as the number of times elected, which entailed the accumulation of political expertise and networks which would allow higher-ranking members to help fulfill the functions of the faction.<sup>52</sup>

In terms of traditional authority, the factions satisfied both aspects of the ideal type and what Weber called the "estate system". Regarding the ideal type, the factions can be seen fulfilling the conditions of not having codified but traditionally defined rules and the governance of inheritance by convention.<sup>53</sup> Although the factions were expected by their leaders and members to fulfill certain functions, these were not codified yet known by all Dietmembers. Furthermore, norms such as proportionality or seniority were not codified, yet all of the LDP's Diet contingent expected these to be followed and judged both their faction and party leaders for their proper fulfillment of these norms because they constituted part of the LDP's internal traditional authority. The governance of factional inheritance was another uncodified norm within the party and it also followed the structures of traditional authority. This happened as the factional succession process devolved into a contest between faction lieutenants, each seeking to prove their ability to fulfill the traditionally defined functions of the faction and the leader.

Regarding the "estate system", Weber identified this as a system of traditional authority where the lieutenants were not indentured servants but prominent men, whose positions cannot be taken away easily and

<sup>51</sup> Stockwin, "Factionalism in Japanese Political Parties", p. 168.

<sup>52</sup> Cox, Gary W., and Frances Rosenbluth. "Factional competition for the party endorsement: The case of Japan's Liberal Democratic Party," *British Journal of Political Science* 26, no. 2 (1996), pp. 262-263, 267; Krauss and Pekkanen, p. 113.

<sup>53</sup> Matheson, Craig. "Weber and the Classification of Forms of Legitimacy," *British Journal of Sociology* (1987), p. 207.

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have a degree of autonomy.<sup>54</sup> The factions closely imitated this, with the faction leader at the top, surrounded by politicians who had their expertise, connections, and at times sub-factional followings that owed allegiance to the leader. These lieutenants could not be easily displaced by the leader due to the power they had over their rights and could operate with a certain autonomy, investing in their future leadership bids.

Finally, when compared to the ideal type of charismatic authority, the faction can be seen fulfilling several conditions. First, the factions had organizational divisions between leaders, leadership groups, and the masses of followers, with the leader distinguished by superior qualities of political survival and power.55 The leader remained the ultimate wielder and arbiter of power within the faction, not only defining the political identity of the faction but also choosing who to promote and what policy commitments would be made. The lieutenants helped keep the faction in line with the positions of the leader and formed the insider group around him that bolstered his rule. Second, the factions tended to exhibit strong cohesion and political identity which were largely sourced from the leaders, who imparted their political positions to their factions and kept them together.<sup>56</sup> Such a leadercentric approach eventually led both to the faction being able to fall into line with the policy choices of successive leaders and their tendency to collapse when succession crises emerged. Third and finally, the faction members judged their leaders on their ability to turn their potential "charisma" into reality. Leaders such as Ōno Bamboku could not have retained their factional followings, had their personalized charismatic leadership not been met by their ability to provide the functions expected of them as faction leaders. As can be seen, the factions did operate on premises that could be understood in terms of Weberian ideal types of authority.

Turning towards the second question of understanding factions as elite organizations the works of Robert Michels and Gaetano Mosca come to the fore, providing the theoretical foundations for the emergence and formation of factionalism within political parties. Beginning with Michels, the first observation that can be made is that in his terms, factions – by being an

<sup>54</sup> Weber, pp. 136-137.

<sup>55</sup> Matheson, p. 209.

<sup>56</sup> Weber, 139.

organization of politicians, or rather further organizations of politicians within the organization that is the political party – are manifestations of the tendency towards oligarchy.<sup>57</sup> Thus, the LDP, which already occupied the central position in the political ruling class of Japan –having had a near complete control on power since 1955– can be seen as having created sub-organizations into which the political elites have sorted themselves.

Furthermore, the emergence of the factions both fits in with the developments which Gilani has identified in Michels' work which are necessary for factions to emerge, that can be found in the case of the LDP's factions. Gilani notes that for an oligarchy to emerge within party organizations, the party has to achieve ideological rigidity, be transformed into a catch-all status, and become self-seeking.<sup>58</sup> On satisfying the conditions for an oligarchy to emerge, it can be found that the LDP satisfies all the conditions that emerge from Michels' work. First, the party had achieved ideological rigidity with conservatism being the core ideology that brought all the politicians into the LDP and united the factions, whose differences occurred at the policy level rather than at the ideological level. Second, the LDP had also become a catch-all party, which came about as it responded to changes in the Japanese electorate and its demands, and the pressures from the international system. This was a development that had the potential of reflecting in the factions as well, for which the Satō lineage is an important example. Third and finally, the LDP had to become self-seeking, which came about as the party -through the factions- worked to secure elections and keep its place in power.

Once the conditions were ripe for an oligarchy to emerge, the oligarchy that emerged had to perform as a managerial or ruling class within the party, with leaders distinguished from the mass of party members with their political power, expertise, and connections, and could then gain personal followings and become independent actors.<sup>59</sup> These developments can be observed in the LDP's factions, as they developed and became entrenched within the party. First, it can be observed that the factions turned into ruling

<sup>57</sup> Michels, pp. 70, 365.

<sup>58</sup> Gilani, Ijaz. "The Iron Law of Oligarchy: A Dilemma for Political Parties," *Strategic Studies* 1, no. 2 (1977), p. 110.

<sup>59</sup> Gilani, p. 110; Michels, p. 70.

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classes and the faction leaders performed managerial duties within the party, co-opting the functions of the party for themselves. On the former point, whilst a single faction emerged as the ruling faction by having its leader elected as Prime Minister and members placed into the key party and Cabinet posts, a factional coalition became a ruling class within the party by forming the factional mainstream. On the latter, the functions of the party were co-opted and taken over as a function of the faction itself, empowering the factional leaders as managers of the affairs of the party in securing endorsements, distributing posts, and providing funds to LDP Dietmembers. Second, it can be observed that faction leaders were always distinguishable from the rest of their factions, which was even evident in press reports and academic literature on the LDP. Furthermore, they had both superior political expertise and networks, which not only set them apart from the rest of their faction members but also became the foundation upon which they formed and sustained their factions. As such, it can be seen that the LDP's factions satisfied the conditions that Michels has set forward, allowing for them to be classified as elite organizations.

Moving onto Mosca, it can be seen that in his conceptualization, factions are an organization of elites who are united in their capacities and can emerge in situations where diversification is constrained.<sup>60</sup> On the point of unity, as demonstrated previously, the LDP's factions brought together politicians of similar policy views and political outlooks. This happened partly as politicians came together with those others with whom they share political views and partly as faction leaders tailored their factional membership to their policy preferences. Having brought politicians of a similar political make together, the factions then put their combined energies to work, by providing political identities, ensuring solidarity in policy affairs, and creating the grounds for policy discussions. On the point of constraints on diversification, what can be seen is that although the factions all subscribed to the broader conservative ideology and did not move beyond it, cleavages emerged between them based on both personalistic and policy terms, with both equally salient. In sum, the result that emerges is that when the Moschian prerogatives are applied to the factions of the LDP, both their functional form and the basis of emergence

<sup>60</sup> Mosca, pp. 163, 164.

satisfies the conditions for them to be identified as elite organizations.

#### In Conclusion - LDP's Factions as Elite Organizations

Overall, it can be seen that the argument that the LDP's factions are elite political organizations that have different policy preferences and are intimately involved with the policymaking processes, while also being involved with the race to control the party presidency and the prime ministry holds. It can be reasonably demonstrated that the LDP's factions have functioned as politically significant organizations, with policy divergences between each faction. The process of factional recruitment and entry constituted the first point at which the factions gained their political coloration. Leaders recruited politicians who fit their preferred political profile whilst politicians sought to join factions with like-minded members. The politicization of the factions continued during its day-to-day operations, as constant leader-member interaction furthered political socialization within the faction. Meanwhile, the factions gave their members distinct political identities and provided political solidarity. Factions fostered policy discussions between members under the control of the leaders- which brought policy matters closer to the heart of factions. In addition, the factions acted as policy actors by actively bringing their policy preferences to bear down on legislation, including the politically central national budget.

The argument here is supported from a theoretical point of view as well when elite and Weberian theories are used. On the one side, factions can be seen as satisfying the conditions for what is essentially a mixed form of Weberian forms of legitimate authority. As such, factionalism in the context of the LDP –and likely in the broader Japanese context– can be seen as having roots that can be appraised and identified in an objective and comparable fashion, regarding how authority and power are wielded within them. In addition, it is also possible in this way to bring more attention to the political actors as significant influences within the LDP's factional politics, since power and authority can be better understood as being held by these individuals within the system rather than being external to them. On the other side, the factions satisfy the political conditions and processes which Michels and Mosca have identified as the emergence of elites and their follower groups. Thus, it can be found that elite theories can explain the question of factionalism within the LDP and that the LDP's factions fit in nicely with the framework for an elite theory approach. In effect, the factions can be reconceptualized as more than differentiated political organizations, that are in constant competition to achieve power. They are also elite organizations that are competing to replace one another as the top echelon of Japan's ruling class.

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