

Challenging Strongmen with Zombies

**Consequences of the Double Candidacy
Clause in the Japanese Mixed Electoral
System**

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[I. Introduction]

In this article, I discuss why, even though most single member districts in other countries are far from competitive despite Duverger's Law, most electoral campaigns are highly competitive in the single member districts of the Japanese House of the Representatives (HR). The hypothesis in this article is that the double candidacy clause in the Japanese mixed electoral system significantly reduces the incumbency advantage of incumbent congresspersons. As a result of the clause, the electoral system in Japan resulted in more competitive and responsive elections in Japan—probably beyond the intention of the drafters.

Substantially, the electoral system may have considerably helped the once weaker Democratic Party Japan (DPJ) to become a real contender to the stronger Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). Without the double candidacy rule, LDP could have kept dominant status for much longer in Japanese politics, due to considerable initial electoral advantage by its number of incumbents and their established electoral support base in special rural districts. Moreover, in a theoretical sense the finding of the article challenges one of the most widely accepted propositions in political science, Duverger's Law. Although Duverger (1954) predicted the emergence and/or stability of two party system under the single member simple plurality (SMSP) system, competitive campaign districts are exceptional rather than the rule in countries with SMSP electoral system such as Britain or the US. In contrast, many contests in Japanese single member districts become or remain close. I argue that SMSP system is in practice conducive to one party dominance at the district level, rather than rivalry between two major parties due to considerable incumbency advantage, without extra condition like the double candidacy system in Japan.

The following sections are organized as follows. In section II, I discuss the background and theory of the article. First, I briefly describe the background of electoral reform in Japan, and the one peculiar character of the new electoral rule—the double candidacy clause. Next, I compare the district level contests between Japan and two other major SMSP countries, the US and Britain, to indicate how the contest in these plain SMSP countries are far from the prediction of Duverger, i.e. the local two party system. Moreover, I discuss the incumbency advantage as the origin of

divergence between theory and practice in those countries, as well as why the double candidacy clause in Japan effectively prevents the incumbent to attain electoral advantage to challengers. In section III, I first discuss the hypothesis to be tested in the article. Next, I present the method and data in detail because of the peculiar nature of the electoral data that prevent using traditional approach for the analysis. Finally, I discuss in section IV the meaning of the empirical analysis from two perspectives; substantial implication to Japanese politics and theoretical implication to comparative politics, in special reconsideration of Duverger's Law.

[II. Background and Theory]

a) Background of the SMD/PR system in Japan and the double candidacy clause

Since 1994, the Japanese HR uses the mixed electoral system with two electoral tiers: single member district (SMD) and the regional proportional representation (PR) with the closed list. In January 1994, Hosokawa cabinet, the coalition government passed a new electoral law to reform the HR electoral system in Japan. After long negotiations, the legislature finally approved the proposal that changes the electoral system from multimember districts/single non-transferable voting system (MMD/SNTV) to the mixed electoral system, the SMD/PR system.

The MMD/SNTV system had been used since 1946, the first election after the end of WWII. The electoral system was criticized as a major source of corruption and pork oriented politics in Japan. Any parties must have two or more candidates in a single district which elects three to five members for each, if they try to attain a majority in the Diet. Hence, those candidates need to compete with the candidates of their own parties in addition with the candidates from the other parties. Consequently they have to differentiate themselves not only with policy program but also personal appeal and constituent service such as pork.

The new electoral system in 1994 adopted the single member district with 300 districts as a primary tier. The reform was originally designed to have candidates compete over policy rather

than pork or personal ties. Political parties have no incentive to run more than one candidate in each district under the single member district, and therefore in theory candidates are supposed to fight for their party and parties' program. In addition, the reform also aims to create a two party system in Japan based on the Duverger's Law. Duverger's Law claims that "a majority vote on one ballot is conducive to a two-party system". Dissatisfied with the LDP's thirty eight years of consecutive rule, people expected that the majoritarian electoral system would make the change of the administration more frequent by creating two party system. On the other hand, the new system also adopted the second tier which elects 200 congresspersons from 11 regional PR lists, probably due to the demand from smaller parties which are not able to survive under the pure SMD system. Each voter has two votes and is able to cast a vote to a candidate in the district and another to a regional party list.

There is an important and peculiar character in the new electoral rule: the double incumbency clause. The double incumbency clause in the electoral law enables political parties to run their SMD candidates in the PR list as well. If a candidate nominated at both tiers wins a seat from SMD tier, her name is excluded from the PR list because she does not need a seat from the PR tier. If she loses in the district, she may gain a seat from PR tier if her rank is high among those still remaining in the list. Moreover, parties are allowed to list these double candidates on the same rank of the PR list. Among the double candidates listed on the same rank, the SMD losers who attracted the largest fraction of votes against winners gain priority to receive a seat.

The congresspersons who lost in SMD but gained seats from PR tier are often called as "Zombie", because they failed in their districts because of their lack of popularity but "resurrected" from the PR list. As suggested from the derogatory nickname, the double incumbency system has been criticized even in during the legislation process, because "losers" whom the constituents did not want to be elected, could be saved from the PR tier. McKean and Scheiner also criticized the dual candidacy because this "arrangement transforms PR representations into locally-based politicians who will rely on personalistic rather than party-based or programmatic campaigning,

effectively converts single-member districts back into the multimember districts of the past, enhances incumbency advantage, and will push the ratio of candidates to seats down as low or even lower than before" (McKean & Scheiner 2000).

However, in this article I argue that this infamous Zombie system prevented LDP from turning initial electoral advantage into enduring predominance again in the Japanese politics by reducing incumbency advantage which could work against democratic responsiveness. In the next section, I indicate the comparative figures of the district level electoral contests between Japan and two major SMSP countries, the US and Britain. These figures will be helpful as a starting point to discuss the nature of electoral competition in the single member districts, as well as the reliability of Duverger's Law.

b) Non competitive SMD races in the US and Britain vs. competitive ones in Japan

American scholars have been well aware that the electoral campaign under their SMSP system often entails many non-competitive districts, at which one party's candidate maintains dominance for several elections. As early as 1959, Wildavsky pointed out that Duverger's Law at most suggests that SMSP discourages the district level multi-party system rather than maintains the district level's two party system. He argued that the constituent in a district can be satisfied to express their heterogeneous preference with a single party, i.e. single party system in the district level (Wildavsky 1959).

Moreover, though scholars did not directly discuss the reliability of Duverger's Law, dramatic increases in reelection rate combined with a stable majority of incumbents of the US Congress election disproved the endurance of local two party system predicted by the law. Many political scientists who study American politics focused on the incumbency advantage as the primary source of these "stable" seats, and discussed the size and source of the advantage, such as individualistic nature of the campaign, quality of the candidates, resources available only to the incumbents such pork provision or media attention (e.g., Levitt & Wolfram 1997, Ansolabehere &

Snyder 2002). Similarly, Britain has many non-competitive districts, even though the campaign in Britain is often assumed as more party centric, less individualistic and not pork oriented. Although I do not know the Duverger's definition of local two party system, those studies clarified that one of two major parties in the US or Britain have little to chance to win in many districts.

Figure 1-4 describes current situation of campaign competitiveness in the US and Britain, two major countries with SMSP electoral system. Figure 1 indicates the kernel density of the Democratic candidate vote-share in the US 2006 Congressional election¹. Figure 3 instead shows the kernel density of Labour candidate vote-share in the British 2005 election of the House of Commons². Both figures indicate that the vote share of major parties in both countries have bimodal distributions. In other words, major parties have the districts with stable majority or those with stable minority status, but not much districts in between. Figure 1 indicates that the mode of Democrat vote-share was less than 40% of the total votes, in the US 2006 Congress election when Democratic Party made a large victory. However, the density also has a peak at where Democrats gained around 70% of the share. Figure 3 similarly shows that British Labour Party's density has a peak at around 45% of the share but the density also has a bump below 35% after sharply drops from the peak at 45%.

Figure 2 and 4 indicate why these bimodalities emerged. These bimodal distributions are primary the composites of two unimodal distribution, a distribution of the districts where a party has an incumbency and another distribution of the districts where the party does not. For example,

¹ The US Congress electoral data is from "Federal Elections 2006: Election Results for the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives" by the Federal Election Commission. <http://www.fec.gov/pubrec/fe2006/federalelections2006.shtml>.

² The British electoral data is from "The British Parliamentary Constituency database, 1992-2005, Release 1.3." by Pippa Norris. <http://ksghome.harvard.edu/~pnorris/data/Data.htm>. I used only the outcomes of England for Britain because it is difficult to show electoral competition in Scotland and Wales in a simple figure, due to the presence of regional parties in those areas. I also created the figure based on the log-transformed vote-share ratio between Labour and Conservative parties given these two party candidates are frontrunners, like those I created for Japan as Figure 5 and 6, because of quasi-multi party competition in the British electoral campaign. I gained bimodal distribution however, and hence I decided not to present the figure.

Figure 2 designated that the kernel density function of Democrats vote share takes a unimodal distribution with mode around .70, given that Democratic party has incumbency. In contrast, the density function takes also the unimodal distribution which has the mode around .38 if the Democratic candidate does not have incumbency. The composite of two unimodal distributions takes the bimodal distribution in Figure 1. Similarly, two bimodal distributions in Britain electoral outcome are also a clear composite of two unimodal distributions with and without incumbents who seek reelection.

These figures indicate that many of the districts are far from competitive in those two major SMS countries. Incumbent candidates usually win with a large margin, but the challenger candidates frequently lose with large margins. In the US 2006 Congress, many of Democrats incumbent attained more than twice as many votes as their Republican challengers. Similarly, many Republican incumbents gained more than 150% of the votes to their opponents even under large national swing against them. In the 2005 British election, the incumbent Labour MPs gained almost 50% of the total vote share, though non-incumbent candidates could attain around 10-30% of the vote-share. Part of the gap might come from skewed preference distribution of the constituent across districts. However, without assuming that some factors keep incumbent winning, it is hard to explain such an extreme distribution of the votes.

In contrast to the US Congress or Britain House of Commons, the electoral outcome of the Japanese single member district does not have a bimodal distribution. Figure 5 indicates the kernel density of the vote-share ratio (log-transformed) between two major parties in the 2005 general election of the House of Representatives. LDP made a landslide victory in the 2005 election due to the popularity of Prime Minister Koizumi and, as a result, the distribution has center in the point considerably larger than 0 (i.e. two parties had a same share). Figure 6 decomposed the distribution in Figure 5 into the districts with and without LDP incumbents. These figures imply that incumbent congresspersons in Japan does not have stable plurality due to the incumbency advantage, and subsequently the elections in each district are much more competitive or at least much less

predictable by the incumbency status of the candidates. The result seems to be counterintuitive to common perceptions of Japanese politics. Many scholars discussed the attributes of Japanese politics and society that could contribute to large incumbency advantage against challengers, such as a personalistic tie between incumbent (in special conservative) politicians and constituents, pork provision et al.

Then, why the difference has emerged between these countries? One possible hypothesis is that the existence of PR tier in Japanese electoral system contributed to the difference. For example, if voters first make their choice of the PR list from the national point of view, and next they choose the SMD candidates according to their PR decision, the incumbent candidates have less electoral advantage owing to their incumbency status. However, I do not adopt this hypothesis. Instead, in this article I argue that the double candidacy clause and subsequent Zombie incumbent is the origin of differences of district contests between the countries. In the next section, I discuss the previous argument for the source of incumbency advantage, and why the double candidacy clause works to eliminate the advantage.

c) Origin of incumbency advantage and the function of double candidacy clause

In their discussion over the incumbency advantage in the US Congress, Levitt and Wolfram argued two main sources of incumbency advantage; the quality gap between the incumbents and challengers, as well as direct officeholders benefits (Levitt & Wolfram 1997). First, incumbent candidates tend to be more experienced and attractive than average candidates are. In short, they are more qualified than their opponents. Otherwise, they would not have been elected in the previous election. Moreover, the established support base and electoral advantage of the incumbents would deter qualified candidates from challenging them in an election. These qualified potential challengers, such as those working as public officials, incur higher opportunity costs to pursuing other public posts. In particular, the Japanese electoral law prohibits public officials to run for other offices before they leave their previous office. The rule prevents experienced and popular

officials running for the higher office due to potential cost of the defeat.

Besides, incumbent candidates have much more electoral resources than their opponents owing to their status as the office holder. Mass media covers political activity of the incumbents more frequently than other (potential) candidates before the campaign. Moreover, incumbents can establish personal ties with their constituents more efficiently by lobbying for the local interest in the legislating process as well providing pork to the local public projects from the budget. Furthermore, in many democratic countries, the incumbent congresspersons receive public funding for their political activities in addition to their salary.

Because of either or both sources of the advantage, once candidates attain incumbency and establish some level of electoral advantage, their advantage leads to positive feedback because the status as an incumbent gives them more electoral resources than their opponent candidate. In addition, the advantage drives out qualified challengers due to their lower probability of attaining the office. The other electoral system in theory would have the incumbency advantage due to the quality and resource of the incumbent candidates. However, the attributes of SMS system which makes each district to have no more than two viable candidates, also contributes the district to have a single viable candidate, because it is easy for parties, candidates and constituents to calculate that they have little chance to oust the incumbent without extraordinary events and/or efforts.

Double candidacy clause, on the other hand, could cancel considerable amount of the self-reinforcing advantage of the incumbents. First, a double candidacy system gives challengers a better chance to gain seats. The challengers do not have to beat strong incumbents in their first election. If only they achieve a certain level of vote-share ratio to the incumbents, the challenger candidates could attain seats from the PR tiers. Therefore, the qualified challengers have much stronger incentive to participate into the campaign against the strong incumbents given the higher likelihood of gaining seats at least from the PR tiers, if not the districts. In addition, if they gain PR seats, in the next election these Zombie incumbents can compete with the incumbents with almost the same electoral resources because now they have seats in the Diet. In other words, I argue that

Japanese SMD would not have the two party system in the district level without the double candidacy clause, though Duverger's Law predicts it as a natural consequence of SMSP system.

[III. Empirical Analysis]

a) Hypothesis

In this section, I discuss the hypothesis to be examined. There are two possible effects of double candidacy clause; indirect effect through the quality of the candidates and direct effect of office holding as Zombie incumbents. In this article, however, I only estimate the direct effect of office holding due to the availability of the data. It is possible to measure the latter effect because of the electoral rule for regional PR, which I explain in the next section in detail. However, it is not possible to observe the quality of the candidates in the counterfactual world without double candidacy. Therefore, I decided to focus on only the direct effect of office holding. Two main hypotheses I test in this article are as follows:

H1: The incumbent candidate does not have an electoral advantage to Zombie incumbent challengers, given their electoral outcome in the previous election.

H2: Incumbent candidates have substantial electoral advantage to vanilla challengers, given their electoral outcome in the previous election.

If both hypotheses hold, then it is possible to infer that double incumbency has reduced the incumbency advantage in the SMD contests and contributed to more competitive races, at least by providing office as Zombie incumbents. However, the electoral rule prevents us from comparing the electoral results between two types of contest without extrapolation, one is the party A has incumbency and party B runs vanilla challenger, and the other is party A has vanilla challenger and party B holds incumbency. I explain the point in detail in the next section. Therefore, I use an

indirect approach instead. As operational hypotheses, I test OH2 instead of H2:

OH2. Zombie incumbent candidates are more competitive than the candidates of the same party without seats (vanilla challengers), given their electoral outcome in the previous election.

Instead of H2, OH (operational hypothesis) 2 compares the electoral outcome of the districts in which the zombie incumbents of party A compete with incumbents of party B on the one hand, and the districts in which vanilla challengers of party A compete with party B incumbents on the other hand, given that they had the same electoral outcome in the previous election. If both H1 and OH2 hold, then it is possible to conclude that H2 also holds—though indirectly—because the combination of the H1 and OH2 inference indicate that incumbent candidates tends to have an electoral advantage over vanilla challengers (if $\text{incumbent}^{\text{zombie}} > \text{vanilla}$, then $\text{incumbent} > \text{vanilla}$).

If the lack of incumbency advantage in Japan suggested in Figure 5 and 6 is attributable to other factors than the double candidacy clause, such as the existence of PR tier itself as I have described, then the evidence supports H1 but does not OH2. Hence, incumbent candidates do not have an electoral advantage over either Zombie incumbent or vanilla challengers, because the constituents do not care about the candidate incumbency status among true incumbent–Zombie incumbent nor vanilla challengers. In the next section, I discuss the technical difficulties of estimating the incumbency effect without extrapolation, draw some graphics to make the result more comprehensible, in addition show the estimates of the statistical analysis.

b) Method & Data

Previous studies on the incumbency advantage tried to solve technical difficulties associated with the nature of available observations. First, there is no overlap in the vote-share ratio between competing camps for each combination of incumbency status. In the Japanese case, if LDP

candidates won in the district in the previous election, it means that the LDP candidates attained more votes than any other party candidates. On the other hand, if DPJ has incumbency in the district, DPJ candidates had more votes than LDP or any other coalition candidates. Hence, the LDP/DPJ vote share ratio is always larger than 1 in the district with LDP incumbents, but smaller than 1 if DPJ holds incumbency. In other words, we cannot observe two districts where different parties have incumbency but they share the same partisan balance. Therefore, if one tries to estimate the effect of incumbency advantage to the other two incumbency status, i.e. non incumbency or Zombie quasi-incumbency with conventional statistical methods, the estimates always entail extrapolation problem.

To avoid the extrapolation in estimating incumbency effects, recently scholars started to use new methodological approach that relies upon quasi-experimental setting: Regression Discontinuity (RD) design. The RD design is used when there is a clear cut-off point according to a value of the covariate in treatment assignment, or in the probability of treatment assignment. In other words, a subject receives treatment A if covariate $X \geq c$ when c is the cutting point, but receives another treatment B if $X < c$. Hence, the covariate X does not have overlapping area across the cutting point c , which leads extrapolation with traditional statistical analysis. The RD design uses the observations within the small range of both side of the cutting point. These observations have asymptotically the same distribution of the observed covariate used for the treatment assignment, in addition not only other observed covariates not used for the assignment but also the unobserved covariates, because within the range the assignment of the treatment is assumed to be almost as “random” due to small random fluctuation of the covariates. As a result, if there is any “gap” in the outcomes between both sides of the cutting point, the gap is attributable to the different treatment status. Hahn, Todd, and Van der Klaauw (2001) and Porter (2003) provided formal theoretical framework and estimation method of the RD design. Considerable number of scholars applied the design to many issues (ex. Van der Klaauw 2002, Angrist & Lavy 1999, and Chay & Greenstone 1998).

Some studies have applied the design for estimating incumbency advantage. Take for example a country with single member districts and two major parties. A district where party A took 1% more votes than party B did must be similar to the district where party A acquired 1% less votes than party B did. However, different parties gain the incumbency status based on the small random changes in their vote-share. Therefore, the difference in the next election can be ascribed to the different incumbency status between them. Lee used the design for the US Congress, Hainmueller and Kern for Germany, and Linden for India (Lee 2008, Hainmueller & Kern 2005 and Linden 2004)

To estimate the local average of the outcomes from both side of the cutting points, I use the kernel weighted local polynomial smoothing line with triangle kernel function. The approach employs the non-parametric fitted lines that gives more weight to the observations close to the estimating point. Therefore, the estimate relies less on the parametric assumption or the covariates balance between the observations far away from the estimating point. I set the bandwidth of the smoothing lines to .15, which provides “smooth” line with minimum width. However, the criteria is subjective more than objective. In theory, the smaller the bandwidth is, the less biased the estimate will be but less efficient, because the non-parametric kernel function uses more nearby but fewer number of observations for the estimation. To examine the robustness of the estimate for the bandwidth, I also estimate the treatment effect with 50% (bandwidth=.075) and 200% (bandwidth = .30) of the initial bandwidth .15. I use the Stata ado-on module *RD* by Nichols to estimate the treatment effect and the bootstrap standard errors of the estimate (Nicols 2007).

Next, the estimation of the Zombie incumbency advantage to other challengers of the same party entails another type of extrapolation problem. If the hypothesis of double candidacy effect is correct, a party A candidate achieves better electoral outcome than party B incumbent if party A's candidate holds Zombie incumbency status than if he is a vanilla challenger, as predicted by OH2. However, if a party provides PR seats to best losers in the region by listing SMD candidate in the same rank, the party has better electoral outcome in the district with Zombie incumbency

than the district without incumbent, given that these districts belong the same PR region. Therefore, the vote-share ratio usually does not overlap between these two treatments status in a region, that leads to extrapolation for the estimation (King & Zeng 2007 discuss the problem of extrapolation).

Nevertheless, the districts with Zombie incumbents can have the same vote-share ratio to the district without districts, if these districts belong to different regions. A region provides PR seat to a candidate who lost with 75% of the vote-share to the winner among those listed on the same rank with other SMD candidates but another region might not provide a seat to the candidate who lost with the same vote-share. For example, in the 2003 HR election, the DPJ candidates could gain Zombie incumbency status with a minimum of 67% of vote-share ratio in Hokuriku region. On the other hand, in Tokyo region DPJ candidates were required to attain a minimum of 86% of the vote-share ratio. These regions were extreme cases, and hence we observe the DPJ candidates with and without Zombie incumbency status in the range of 67% to 86% of DPJ vote-share to the governing coalition victorious candidates in the 2003 election. Similarly, the minimum vote-share for the Zombie status ranged from 85% to 95% across regions, among the LDP candidates nominated on the same rank in the PR list.

Consequently, it is possible to estimate the treatment effect of Zombie incumbency without extrapolation by comparing the electoral outcomes of subsequent election in these districts within these ranges of vote-share ratio. As RD design estimates the effect of incumbency status at very competitive districts, the methods estimate the treatment effect (i.e. Zombie incumbent effects) for the observations with the covariates falling between the range, i.e. one party had a lead to the other party. Therefore, in a strict sense the effect could be different for extremely competitive (vote-share ratio was almost 1) or non competitive districts (the ratio was smaller than .50). However, it is not possible to infer these districts from the available observation.

I use the conventional OLS method in estimating the advantage of Zombie incumbents to non-incumbents candidates. The outcome variables are the vote-share ratio in 2005 between the candidates of two major camps, i.e. candidates of governing coalition (mostly LDP but few from

Komei Party, the coalition partner of the LDP) vs. DPJ, log-transformed. I used the following variables as the covariates: the vote-share ratio in the previous election in 2003 (log-transformed) and its square, DID index which measures the ratio of urban population among the constituents, and participation and exit of SDPJ candidates in the SMD contest of the districts (zero-one dummy variable for each).

However, I used only the districts with certain range of previous vote-share to avoid the extrapolation as I have discussed. For estimating the effect of DPJ's zombies, I use the districts which DPJ/governing coalition candidates vote-share were between .67 and .86 in the 2003 elections due to the range of minimum vote-share required to attain Zombie status across regions, as I explained. For zombies of governing coalition, I use the districts which governing coalition/DPJ vote-share were between .85 and .95 with the same reason with DPJ Zombies.

I used the electoral results of the 2003 and 2005 HR elections. Japanese electorates experienced four elections under the current electoral system (1996 and 2000, in addition to 2003 and 2005). Nevertheless, I did not use the electoral results in 1996 and 2000 because due to unstable party system it is hard to compare the electoral outcomes of each district for two consecutive elections before 2003. In addition, the redistricting in 2002 also disturb comparing the outcomes for considerable number of districts across elections. Therefore, I decided to use the electoral outcomes in 2003 and 2005 for this article.

On the other hand, I could not use some of the districts because of LDP infighting in 2005 and subsequent radical change of the LDP vote-share. The Prime minister Koizumi of the LDP expelled some of the LDP congress members who oppose his proposal to the postal service reform. Those expelled former LDP incumbents ran as independent or as candidates of new party and in response the LDP leadership run new candidates as "assassins" to these "traitors". Therefore, the LDP vote-share abruptly changed in those districts because new LDP nominees challenge to the former LDP incumbents. Therefore, I used only the districts which did not have major splits among conservative camp to the analysis, in order to make the comparison more efficiently. In addition, I

use only the districts where DPJ candidates ran both in 2003 and 2005.

I used the log-transformed vote-share ratio between two camps. The effective number of candidates were close to two for two elections studied in this article (around 2.3 in both election). However, JCP ran candidates in most of the districts in these elections. Moreover, SDPJ also ran candidates in some of the districts. These minor parties' vote-share disturbs using raw vote-share of either camp as the explanatory and outcome variables, as Lee did for Democrats vote-share in the analysis of the US Congress (Lee 2008). Consequently, I use the log-transformed vote-share ratio between governing coalition and DPJ, because vote-share ratio is more robust for the change of minor parties vote-share, as well log-transformation made the ratio have symmetrical distribution.

I add the quadratic term of previous vote-share ratio because both LDP and DPJ did better in the districts where they were previously weak. Koizumi's proposal to reform postal service antagonized traditional electoral base of the LDP in rural area, and consequently LDP candidates did better in urban districts than rural one. By the same token, DPJ candidates fight better not in urban districts but rural districts, although DPJ was rather urban party before the election. Therefore, the 2003 vote-share is expected to have non-linear effect on the 2005 vote-share of each camp. The quadratic term is used to control this shift of the support base in the election. DID index is also included to control the rise of LDP popularity in urban districts. Finally, the participation and exit of SDPJ are included into the model because they have considerable effect of DPJ vote-share. Because SDPJ is more leftist party than DPJ is, and DPJ is more leftist than LDP is, the exit of SDPJ from SMD contest increase DPJ vote-share. Similarly, participation of SDPJ decreases DPJ vote share. In 2005, JCP exited from some of the electoral district, though the party had been keeping the candidates in most of the districts for many years. However, the number of JCP exited districts is very small among the districts I used for the statistical analysis in this article. Therefore, I decided not to include the JCP exit as a control variable.

c) Result

In this section, I explain the result from the statistical analysis discussed above. Figure 7 shows how the vote-share of two camps changed between 2003 and 2005, given the combinations of incumbency status of the districts. Each marker indicates the distribution of vote-share ratio (log-transformed) of two political camps in 2003 and 2005. The points where X is larger than 0 indicates the districts in which governing coalition (most of them were LDP members) hold incumbency because $X > 0$ means they won in the previous election. On the other hand, the points located in the area with $X < 0$ indicate DPJ had incumbency status in the 2005 campaign because they won in the previous elections. Circle markers indicates the challengers to the incumbents did not have Zombie status, and triangle markers mean that the challengers had Zombie incumbency. The four lines are local polynomials that indicate local estimates of vote-share given the incumbency types. Finally, four vertical lines at $X = -.16, -.05, .15, .40$ each corresponds that the minimum and maximum value of the minimum vote-share of the previous election required to gain the Zombie incumbency among the candidates who nominated on the same rank with other SMD candidates³. Therefore, the ranges between two vertical lines ($-.16 < X < -.05$, i.e. $.85 < \exp(X) < .95$ and $.15 < X < .40$, i.e. $1/.86 < \exp(X) < 1/.67$) contain both Zombie and non-Zombie candidates. In contrast, the districts outside of the range have only one of the incumbency status except for few districts, where LDP candidates are guaranteed of PR seats by ranked on the first or second rank of the regional list, as the compensation of challenging to DPJ cadres (ex. Mie 3rd, Nagano 4th districts).

Two solid lines meet the $X=0$ line at close points. It suggests that the electoral outcomes in 2005 are very close again between the two types of districts, one is where governing coalition won and DPJ candidates gained Zombie incumbency after the close competition in 2003 on the one hand, and the other is where DPJ made a victory in a close match but a governing coalition candidate attained Zombie status in 2003 on the other hand. In the upper right area of the figure, the distance of the two polynomial lines suggest that governing coalition incumbents achieved better electoral

³ Note that X is the log-transformed vote-share. $\exp(-.16)=.85$, $\exp(-.05)=.95$. $\exp(.15)=1.16=1/.86$ and $\exp(.40)=1.49=1/.67$.

outcome than DPJ challengers if the DPJ challengers did not have Zombie status, even if the vote-share ratio in the previous elections would have been the same. Similarly, two lines which run lower left side of the figure indicate that DPJ incumbents had much tougher campaigns in 2005 if governing coalition challengers had Zombie incumbency, given DPJ candidates had the same vote-share to their opponent candidates.

The RD design uses the gap of two local polynomial fits estimated from both side of the cutting point ($X=0$) to measure the advantage of incumbents to Zombie incumbents, as explained in the previous section. The figure suggests that there is only small gaps in the vote-share around the cutting point, and hence there were not much advantage for the incumbent candidates if their opponent candidate hold Zombie incumbency status. Table 1 shows that the RD design with the bandwidth .15 estimates the advantage was almost zero (-0.003, i.e. less than 1% (i.e. $\exp(-0.003) = .997$). The RD estimate is sensitive to the choice of bandwidth, and therefore I also tried 50% and 200% of the original bandwidth. These alternative width specifications do not change the result much, however. All of these coefficients were statistically significant, based on the boot-strapped standard error of each coefficient. I checked the balance of DID index to both side of the cutting point because of potential large impact of DID to the electoral outcome in 2005. I found that the covariate was significantly unbalanced in the model with the bandwidth .30, insignificant with the bandwidth .15, and most balanced with the bandwidth .075, though the result is expectable by definition (the closer to the cutting point, the less variation of the covariate).

The table 2 in turn indicates that DPJ Zombie incumbents collected average 10% ($\exp(.097 = 1.102$)) more votes than the DPJ vanilla candidates without PR seats, after controlling previous electoral outcomes, urbanization level with DID index and SPDJ participation/exit. The coefficient was on the border of statistical significance (p-value=.050) given the small number of relevant observations ($n=44$) and large uncertainty to the electoral outcome, though the size of the effect is substantial. The result indicates that DPJ Zombie incumbents had much better electoral outcomes than the candidates without seats in 2005, given the other covariates were controlled. In contrast,

Table 3 indicates that Zombie incumbents of the governing coalition attained 3% more votes than the candidate without seats, given the other covariates constant. The size of the effect does not reach statistical significance though.

To make a story simpler, I conducted a simple simulation. Suppose that LDP, DPJ and JCP candidates run in the district K, which has been most common combinations of the candidates in the last few Japanese HR elections. 210,000 voters cast their votes and each of LDP, DPJ and JCP candidate won 108,000 (51.4%), 92,000 (43.8%) and 10,000 (4.8%). DPJ candidate lost in the district but she attained PR seats because she won more than 85% of the votes which LDP candidate attained ($92,000/108,000=0.852$). There is another district L in the other PR region. Each of the party gained exactly the same number votes as they did in the district K. However, DPJ candidate in the district L failed to gain PR seat due to large number of competitive districts in the region. In the next election, the same number of voters show up to the voting booth in both districts. In addition, JCP attained 10,000 votes again. Suppose that the DPJ Zombie candidate in the district K attained 100,100 (47.7%) votes and beat her LDP incumbent opponents who won 99,900 (47.6%) votes with narrow margin. Given the condition, the DPJ non-Zombie candidate in the district L is expected to attain less than 91,000 ($100,100/1.102 = 90,834$, 43.3%) and lose to his LDP opponent with larger margin than the previous election. In the absolute term, Zombie incumbency status provides additional 4.4% of the total vote-share, or 4.6% additional share of two major candidate votes.

In conclusion, the results in the section strongly support the two (operational) hypotheses in this article that H1: Incumbent candidates do not have electoral advantage to Zombie incumbent challengers, given their electoral outcome in the previous election, as well OH2: Zombie incumbent candidates are more competitive than the candidates of the same party without seats (vanilla challengers), given their electoral outcome in the previous election. These two outcomes also support H2: Incumbent candidates have substantial electoral advantage to vanilla challengers, given their electoral outcome in the previous election.

[IV. Inference and Discussion]

a) Substantial Implication for Japanese Politics

The results of this article suggest an alternative consequence of the Japanese electoral reform, if the electoral rule would not have adopted the double candidacy clause. In the counterfactual world, the incumbent candidates—in particular those of the LDP—could have enjoyed a much more stable electoral advantage because of their incumbency status, as congresspersons in the US do. Although the system without double candidacy could have benefited DPJ incumbents at the same time, there are many reasons to believe that the double candidacy system helped the DPJ more than it did the LDP.

First, the statistical analysis suggests that DPJ vanilla challengers tend to suffer from a substantial electoral disadvantage. The estimates of the statistical analysis indicate that governing coalition candidates did not have an electoral advantage over the DPJ Zombie challengers. In contrast, the DPJ Zombie challengers did far better than other DPJ candidates without seats. Although there is an extrapolation problem, these results infer that incumbents of governing coalition have strong electoral advantage to DPJ non-Zombie challengers because of their incumbency status. The advantage could be more than 4% of vote share of the district given the example in the simulation. In other words, without the double candidacy clause and Zombie incumbent, DPJ challengers always have had to compete with LDP incumbents with more than 4% of electoral disadvantage. However, under the current system those challengers are able to compete with the incumbents without the disadvantage, once they won certain vote-share to the incumbents and gain PR seats, i.e. Zombie incumbency status. In contrast, LDP challengers seem to have little advantage based on their quasi- incumbency status due to Zombie seats.

The heterogeneity of the Zombie effects between parties could be the result of several factors. First, due to its weak local organization, DPJ had a tendency to run candidates less known to local constituents. Therefore, incumbency status even as Zombie incumbent might have stronger

effect for DPJ candidates, because the status helps the candidates to stay and become familiar in the districts. In contrast, LDP candidates tend to be known in the local population before they run for example because of their experience in local politics. Therefore, Zombie incumbency status might not have large effect on their electoral outcome of LDP challengers to compete with the DPJ incumbents in the next election.

Next, even if Zombie status would have the homogenous effect on the electoral outcomes, I would still believe that the double candidacy system had benefited to DPJ rather than to LDP from two reasons. First, LDP had much more incumbency districts than DPJ during first few elections under the system. In the counterfactual world without the double incumbency clause, the incumbents had substantial electoral advantage to challengers regardless to their party affiliation. Consequently, the alternative system could have helped the party with more incumbents than the other parties, i.e. LDP.

In addition, LDP had priority to provide the PR seats for excessive incumbents instead of saving the SMD losers. The electoral reform corrected notorious malapportionment between urban and rural districts during the SNTV era, in addition reduces the number of representatives elected from the districts (more than 500 to 300). As a result, LDP had more incumbents than the number of districts in special at the rural area. In order to avoid the internal strife that can be fatal to the electoral competition in the SMD, the LDP chose to nominate the excessive incumbents to the highest rank of the PR list to provide them safe seats (ex. Niwa 1997 pp263-265 as a case study on Toyama prefecture and Hokuriku region). Moreover, in some prefecture the PR seats are also used as incentive for the former LDP congresspersons to return to LDP without conflicts over the districts (ex. Kage 1997, pp321).

DPJ, in contrast, could use the PR tier primary to save the best losers in the single member districts with the double candidacy system. Although I do not have reliable evidences to believe that DPJ chose the strategy because the leaders knew the possible positive effect of the double

candidacy⁴, in hindsight the choice helped the party to become major contenders against LDP. DPJ started as relatively small party in 1996, and hence the party was not necessarily competitive in the campaign at the single member districts. In addition, DPJ does not have a sufficient number of incumbents nor candidates, who should be prioritized in the PR tier as a compensation for not running in the districts. Therefore, DPJ gave more emphasis to the campaign in PR tier, not SMD. In a sense, LDP ran SMD candidates to PR list with the double candidacy clause, but DPJ ran the PR candidates to the districts with the clause. (Kage 1997). In brief, party leaders of LDP and DPJ chose different usage of the PR tier to solve their own organizational problems, which each of the party had to struggle during the early phase of the current electoral system. However, these strategies happened to have considerable impact on the partisan balance in the Japanese legislature.

Finally, DPJ could benefit further from the double candidacy system due to better chance of recruiting qualified candidate than it otherwise were. Studies on incumbency advantage in the US show that part of electoral advantage of the incumbents is attributable to quality of the candidates (ex. Levitt and Wolfram 1997). Because of the long odds to oust the incumbents, qualified politicians do not have incentive to challenge them given their larger opportunity cost than less qualified candidates. The double candidacy clause on the other hand provided better chance for the DPJ challengers in SMD to gain seats, at least from PR tier. The challengers do not have to beat the LDP incumbents for the first time. Instead, they only had to gain two thirds to five

⁴ Some evidences suggest that no party had noticed the possible effect of Zombie incumbent at least during the few campaigns under the new electoral system. First, Kage describes that the drafters believed that double incumbency clause functions to keep opposition party candidates in the district contests, by allowing the PR candidates also running from SMD district (Kage 1997, pp313). Next, not only LDP, but also New Frontier Party (NFP), the second largest party at the first election under the system and one of the major actors that negotiated to reform the electoral system, did not use the double candidacy clause to save their lost candidates in SMD. In addition, there is another though indirect evidence that the double candidacy was not important issue among the stakeholders during the legislative process. Norihiko Narita, the former secretary of Prime Minister Hosokawa and one of the most important in the policy process of electoral reform, has lectured about the process which was more than 80 pages long (Narita 1996). In his lecture, he described detailed negotiation process for the electoral reform behind the scene. The main subjects of the negotiation was the number of seat allocation to SMD and PR tiers, as well unit of PR districts (i.e. national, regional or prefectural). However, in the hours long lecture Narita did not mentioned anything about the discussion over the double candidacy clause.

sixths of the vote-share to the incumbents in the case of the 2003 election. Consequently, ambitious and capable political entrepreneurs had more incentive to run and challenge the LDP incumbents even in the district LDP has been strong. The statistical analysis in this article suggests that the LDP incumbency advantage to DPJ challengers without Zombie status could be 4 to 5%, but the number could have been even bigger owing to the difficulty for DPJ to recruit qualified challengers. It is not possible to know the quality of candidates in the counter-factual world without double candidacy clause. Nevertheless, the influence of the clause can be studied with the interviews for the DPJ congresspersons and candidates as a future project.

In conclusion, the double candidacy clause had helped the DPJ to become a major contender to LDP. In theory, the electoral system should have equivalent effect for all political parties under the system. However, given the political context during the early phase of competition under the current electoral system, I conclude that DPJ gained more desirable results than any other parties did. If it were not for the clause, LDP could have kept more stable majority than it actually did, due to the combination of large incumbency advantage as well more incumbent congress members. DPJ might have attained a hundred “safe” districts among urban or industrial area where the party holds incumbency. However, the DPJ leaders would find difficulty to throw the incumbents out in the other districts, how unpopular the LDP administration would be. Scholars might find the “one and a half” party system of LDP and DPJ in Japan again instead of the two party system, as they found in the dominant LDP and weaker Japanese Socialist Party during the 1960s. Previous studies criticized the double candidacy clause because it saves unwanted candidate, such as the incumbents charged with corruption scandal. However, those criticisms missed that challengers cannot beat the strong incumbents even when they are under scandal, if the incumbents have strong electoral advantage in addition to their established electoral base.

Recent statements by LDP leaders suggests that LDP now understands the electoral advantage of Zombie incumbents, and decides to provide PR seats as much as possible to their best losers in SMD. SUGA Yoshihide, the Deputy Chairman of Election Strategy Council of the LDP

remarked that LDP nominates all of the SMD candidates in the rank of each PR list, and primary does not allow candidates to run either from PR only or double candidates with higher rank than the other SMD candidates⁵. Consequently, from the next election not only DPJ but also LDP primary use their PR seats to give Zombie incumbency status. The double candidacy system, therefore, will work to stabilize the district level two party system instead of benefiting one party than the other.

b) Theoretical Implications: Duverger's Law Revisited

The empirical analysis of the article infer that Japanese SMD could have been another example of one party system in the district level, in addition to the US and Britain. Duverger's Law stated that "the simple majoritarian single-ballot system favors two-party-system". As Cox carefully pointed, the proposition holds at most district level, but not necessarily at national level as Canada or India legislature indicate. Moreover, the reliability of original Duverger's Law is dubious even at the district level. Wildavsky criticized that it is very likely that each district has one party superiority under the SMSP system as his response to Duverger's early work of his "law" (Wildavsky 1959). Moreover, Cox carefully defines his famous M+1 rule as the "upperbound" of the number of competitive candidates—not as the "number" of viable candidates. He remarked that, even though "the local version of Duverger's Law states that ordinary plurality elections usually lead to two viable candidates ", "the only explicit argument in favor of this prediction is that third party candidates will suffer from substantially from strategic voting..." In other words, plurality electoral system has one or two viable candidates in a district, but not necessarily two.

Nevertheless, regardless of their careful reservation to the possibility of viable candidates fewer than M+1, to my best knowledge there have been no systematic following studies that discussed the condition which lead to equilibrium at either one or two under the SMSP system, or more generally M or M+1. Although the answer depends on the definition of "viable", the electoral

⁵ Asahi Shimbun Nov. 28 2007.

outcome I indicated in the figure 1-4 suggests that the campaigns with incumbent predominance are more frequent than those with two equal contenders under the SMSP system. In addition, the empirical analysis of this article suggests that incumbent would have large electoral advantage to the challengers if it were not for the double candidacy clause, or at least the system had not been used as DPJ did to save the best losers. I would instead state the preposition that “the simple majoritarian single-ballot system favors two viable candidates than more than two, but often favors single viable candidate than two viable ones.

The figures and empirical analysis suggest that once a party has acquired incumbency in majority of the districts, the party is able to keep majority for many years until a huge setback happens. Incumbent candidates keep winning because they have electoral advantage as the incumbents nevertheless there might be some turnovers in small number of districts. Consequently, the majority party maintains majority in the legislature because they have more incumbent congresspersons than the other parties. In a sense, two-party systems under the majoritarian electoral system can be an exception rather than the rule. There could be red districts and blue districts where each of red and blue party almost sure to win. However, the balance of them might be 50:50 but can be 80:20.

Empirically, Democratic Party kept majority in the US Congress since 1954, the year Duverger published his “law” until forty years later, 1994. Similarly, Conservative Party kept the majority for almost twenty years between 1979 and 1997 in the British House of Commons. Moreover, the SMDP electoral system often cohabitates with semi-authoritarian regime which governing party remains in power with a legitimacy from the election in addition to illiberal measures, such as the Democratic Party in the US South from the Reconstruction to the 1960s, the UMNO in Malaysia or the PAP in Singapore.

Duverger’s Law has been widely accepted as one of the few theories political scientists are able to claim as the principle, as those in the natural science. During the discussion over the electoral reform, many Japanese politicians seemed to believe that the installation of the SMD drives national

party system into two party system by creating two party competitions in the district level . Indeed, currently many of the district level electoral contests in Japanese SMD have two viable candidates of LDP (or Komei in some districts) and DPJ, and both contenders have substantial chance to get elected based on small national swing, such as popularity of prime minister or political scandal of the ministers. However, the outcome of the reform is not the result of Duverger's Law, but rather a coincidence due to the introduction of auxiliary clause, the double candidacy clause as well initial electoral choices made by LDP and DPJ leaders.