

How Electoral Reform Boomeranged

CHAPTER I

How a Diet Member's Koenkai Adapts to Social and Political Changes

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THE 1994 REFORM of the Japanese electoral system was an attempt to introduce British-type party politics to Japan and to accord greater emphasis on electoral competition based upon political parties and their policy platforms. In practice, however, the new electoral system, the pinnacle of which was the single-seat constituency system,¹ severely undermined party discipline, and political parties became more fragmented. It made more autonomous the individual Diet members who had placed utmost priority upon their own electoral survival. As a result, this ironically led to a strengthening of the *koenkai* (personal support organizations), the reform of which, both as the focus of candidates' competition to provide selective services to the electorate and as the breeding ground for corruption, had been the prime objective of the electoral reforms of 1994 in the first place. Elections in Japan have thus come to bear an ever-greater resemblance to the American Congressional elections, in which electoral results are more and more influenced by personal networks and personal images. This is why candidates have found that, contrary to initial expectations, elections cost twice as much, both in terms of funds and energy, as before.

It is impossible to determine at this point whether this phenomenon is of a transitory or more lasting nature, but as far as the 1996 general election of the House of Representatives (Lower House) indicates, it is hard to deny that the results were far from what the

framers of the electoral reform had envisaged. From this perspective, this chapter will reexamine the role of the *koenkai* in Japanese elections, analyzing the long-term development of a particular *koenkai* that was inherited from a Diet member by his son-in-law. First, I will outline how this *koenkai* was initially organized, and how it evolved thereafter, particularly focusing upon how the son-in-law has tried to adapt its structure to the rapid urbanization of this district. Then, I will indicate how this *koenkai* has been restructured in response to the changing electoral environment since the electoral reforms of 1994.²

An existing case study of *koenkai* based in rural areas has demonstrated that the function of *koenkai* tends to evolve from an association based on comradeship and volunteer spirit into an organization for spoils distribution (Yamada 1992). In contrast, the case study below indicates that the reverse can also happen. The implication of this observation is that there is a variation in the manner in which a *koenkai* may evolve.

When we analyze *koenkai* in elections, it is important to note that Diet members have relied upon them to amass votes not uniformly, but to varying degrees. For instance, some candidates are largely dependent upon the *Nokyo* (Japanese Agricultural Cooperative Association) or other interest groups, such as business associations and professional groups (including the medical doctors' associations), to mobilize votes, rather than upon their own *koenkai*. Other Diet members rely mostly upon local politicians or local notables to win and sustain their seats; still others have done so with the cooperation of prefectural governors and local government officials. Furthermore, a few candidates rely extensively upon the mass media to create favorable images for themselves, whereas many seek to appeal to generalized voter support, making speeches on the street or at the train station every morning. Further, there have been instances in which candidates have successfully won both voter support and their seats by articulating their policy platforms through speeches at large gatherings (Sato 1985, 358; Tanaka 1995, 71–81). In short, not all conservative politicians have made *koenkai*-centered, personalized networks as their central strategy to win their seats. Moreover, rather than relying on a single means of mobilization, individual candidates have been known to employ a variety of strategies to garner support. A candidate's objective is to win a seat, and toward this goal, any and all available means will be used.

While the strategy of mobilizing votes through *koenkai* is highly efficient in the sense that, because it centralizes information regarding its membership, it is a highly reliable base of support, a *koenkai* requires much time and money to run. This is the main reason why not all the conservative Diet members have centered them as their electoral strategy. Maintaining *koenkai* is often extremely time consuming for the Diet member, reducing time that the Diet member can commit to larger political issues, posing a serious dilemma for the national legislator.

Another advantage of *koenkai* is that once institutionalized, they can easily be transferred to sons and daughters, thus producing *nisei* (second-generation) Diet members. But *koenkai* present a serious obstacle to party realignment. Because they are bound by strong feelings of personal loyalty between the members and the Diet member, it is far more difficult to incorporate them into the central party organization than it is to reorganize other existing institutionalized schemes for voter mobilization, such as those that rely upon local politicians, local notables, or interest groups. For instance, while local politicians have often cultivated close relationships with one another through mutual cooperation in local assemblies, no such opportunity for cooperation has existed among *koenkai*. Even among *koenkai* of Diet members who belong to the same political party, the relationship is characterized overwhelmingly by competition and rivalry, and it is exceedingly difficult to transform this hostility into mutual cooperation.

Furthermore, relationships within a *koenkai* are commonly characterized by hierarchy, as well as by personal rivalry. When electoral reform made it imperative to integrate several *koenkai* into a single organization as a party local branch, the existence of these organizational characteristics hampered the integration efforts because they disturbed the prevailing hierarchy. A senior position within a particular *koenkai* provides an opportunity for participation (in an analogous manner to a regular position in a sports team), as well as enhances the personal prestige of the person holding the position, and as such, active members of *koenkai* have a tendency to cling to their positions and to staunchly oppose any attempts at transforming the existing hierarchical personnel structure within the *koenkai*.

Also, the fund-generating function of *koenkai* provides a strong incentive for individual Diet members to preserve the *koenkai* even after the Diet member has left that particular election district.³ In today's

fluid political climate, moreover, the fear, shared by many Diet members, of yet another electoral system reform acts as a barrier not only against efforts to incorporate *koenkai* into the central party organization but also against attempts to merge and/or reorganize the *koenkai* themselves. The analysis below will address the changes that a particular *koenkai* has undergone as a result of redistricting.

THE KOENKAI OF AICHI KIICHI (MIYAGI PREFECTURE, FIRST DISTRICT)

Aichi Kiichi retired from the Ministry of Finance (MOF) in 1950 after having served as high as director of the Banking Bureau, and successfully ran as a Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) candidate for the House of Councillors (Upper House) election from the nationwide district. In 1953, he became the political vice minister of the MOF, and in 1955, he ran a successful bid for a Lower House seat from the Miyagi First District. After that, he won every election that he ran in, and, having served in such prominent positions as minister for foreign affairs and minister of finance, he became one of the most prominent national politicians to hail from Miyagi Prefecture in the postwar era.

Aichi easily won his first campaign for the Upper House with the endorsement of business networks associated with the MOF, such as the banking, *sake*, salt, and tobacco businesses. It was primarily due to this easy first victory that he then decided to launch a bid for the Lower House. Running for the Lower House meant that Aichi had to lure votes from areas that were strongholds of such conservative politicians as Honma Shun'ichi (in the northern part of Miyagi Prefecture) and Shoji Ichiro (in the southern part of the prefecture). Buoyed by his easy victory in the Upper House elections, Aichi was optimistic of his electoral prospects, but he barely won his Lower House seat.

From this bitter experience, Aichi's secretary, Muto Yoichi, assisted by Aichi's wife, set out to build a stronger electoral base within Aichi's electoral district. Aichi entrusted the task of establishing a support organization entirely to Muto. At first, Muto found himself at a loss as to what to do, but soon he decided to meet the supporters of Honma and Shoji who were not entirely content with their respective Diet members and to lure them into Aichi's camp.

That summer, 1955, shortly after the end of the Diet session, Muto and Aichi spent forty-five days visiting potential supporters in hopes of gaining converts. A typical day would consist of small talk sessions in the morning, a couple of speeches at larger gatherings in the afternoon, and dinner and alcohol with groups at night. In the process, Muto established Aichi-kai (Aichi Association), a *koenkai* for Aichi at the village, town, and city levels throughout his electoral district. In the city of Sendai, the largest city in Miyagi Prefecture, support groups were set up at the elementary-school-district level. Former classmates and alumni of Aichi's alma mater, Sendai Daini High School, were mobilized as leaders of these local support groups in Sendai. Then, Muto persuaded the leader of the local Youth Group (Seinen-dan), which was a very active organization in Miyagi Prefecture, to establish the Young Men's Aichi-kai (Seinen Aichi-kai). Furthermore, Muto organized the Association of Women Concerned with Political Issues (Seiji wo Kiku Fujin no Kai), and established housewives' support groups throughout the electoral district. (In contrast, Aichi was unable to organize young women.) Whenever he was back from Tokyo, Aichi, who was fond of drinking, would invite numerous guests and hold parties at his home. Aichi's wife also cooperated in these efforts, and, in particular, often accompanied Muto to visit supporters' homes. Thus emerged a powerful personal support organization, which later came to be known as the Aichi Corps (Aichi Gundan).

The relationship between the Nokyo and Aichi was rather remote, primarily because the Nokyo already had close ties with Honma and Shoji, as well as with a Socialist-backed candidate, at the time. Aichi, as mentioned earlier, a former MOF bureaucrat, enlisted the support of local financial businesses, including the Shichijushichi Bank (the 77 Bank) and the Tokuyo Bank. Backing from these local financial institutions reinforced Aichi's financial position, which was already relatively strong, owing to the substantial financial support that he enjoyed from financial institutions based in Tokyo.

The number of Aichi's staff steadily increased, and during elections Aichi would send out members of his staff to hold small gatherings, sometimes more than ten times a day, at the grass-roots level. He also sought to heighten a feeling of festivity by organizing a bicycle parade (of between fifty and one hundred bicycles) behind his own campaign car, and by holding a gathering of ten thousand people in Sendai.

Many of the members who joined Aichi's staff (as secretaries) eventually became local politicians themselves. Muto himself later won a seat in the Miyagi Prefectural Assembly, but he continued to run Aichi's campaigns. The Aichi-kai also successfully mobilized for the Upper House elections and produced an Aichi-kai-endorsed Diet member. Although Aichi developed strong ties with numerous local politicians in this manner, he persisted in his electoral strategy of reaching out to the voters directly through the Aichi-kai instead of employing the indirect method of mobilizing votes through local politicians.⁴ Aichi also carefully distanced himself from local politics for two reasons: First, he did not want to meddle in "cumbersome affairs" involving the rivalries of local politicians and pork-barreling at the local level, and second, he realized that it was difficult to oppose the policies of the popular mayor of Sendai, Socialist-backed Shimano Takeshi.

Aichi also refrained from expanding his base of support into the northern part of Miyagi Prefecture, which was soon to be controlled by Ito Soichiro. This was not only because Aichi was able to mobilize sufficient votes for reelection in Sendai, the most populous area in his electoral district, but also because he realized that moving into Ito's stronghold would only work to the advantage of opposition parties such as the Japan Socialist Party.

SUCCESSION BY A NISEI

After Aichi Kiichi's sudden death in 1973, the Aichi-kai strongly urged Aichi Kazuo, the husband of Kiichi's daughter, to run for the Diet. Kazuo first ran for the next Lower House election held in 1976 and won. During the three years that elapsed in between, Kazuo, his wife, and his mother-in-law (Kiichi's widow) visited thousands of former supporters and enlisted their backing.

With Kazuo's succession, Muto's role in the day-to-day management of the Aichi-kai diminished substantially. This owed as much to the rising "jealousy" of and criticism against Muto's prominent role in the Aichi-kai from other local politicians, as to the fact that Muto and Kazuo were not always on good terms. Unlike Kiichi, Kazuo preferred to manage *koenkai* affairs himself. This has persisted until the present day.

Kazuo chose neither to establish an additional *koenkai* for himself (apart from establishing small organizations at the margins) nor to restructure the Aichi-kai substantially, but to work through the existing *koenkai* apparatus. One reason for this was that Kazuo's mother-in-law enjoyed the strong faith of the existing *koenkai* organization. However, this is not to say that she became a particularly influential figure within the Aichi-kai. Meanwhile, the second generation of Kiichi's women's support groups soon developed into a formidable group. (This second-generation group was called Group Ai.)⁵

Around the time of Kiichi's death, Mitsuzuka Hiroshi, who started to run as an LDP candidate from the same electoral district as Kiichi's, was rapidly expanding his base of support within the district. A former Miyagi Prefectural Assembly representative, Mitsuzuka had first won his seat in the Diet in 1972, one election before Kazuo's first bid for the Diet. Mitsuzuka's primary base of support was among businesses, particularly among industries that were traditionally associated with political patronage, such as the construction industry and the Japan National Railways. The rivalry between Kazuo and Mitsuzuka escalated into a fierce struggle for votes known as the Aichi-Mitsuzuka warfare. Many of the former construction firms that had hitherto been members of the Aichi-kai switched allegiances to support Mitsuzuka.

In the early nineties, twenty years after Kazuo's succession, the Aichi-kai appeared, at least at first glance, significantly disintegrated and weakened compared to Kiichi's days. Nevertheless, with the rise in his popularity and name recognition, Kazuo has attracted increasing numbers of independents. He now draws more votes than Kiichi did in his day. (During the same period, the city of Sendai has also further urbanized.) Kazuo's popularity owes as much to his elite image as a graduate of Hibiya High School (one of the top high schools in Tokyo) and the University of Tokyo, as to his "family man" image, with a "charming wife and good children."

Among the support groups that Kazuo personally created, one of the most successful was the Aichi Kazuo Sings with Mothers Group (Aichi Kazuo to Uta wo Utau Mamasan no Kai), which made him a favorite among married women (Kazuo was a member of a university chorus group during his university days). This group has become less active in recent years as Kazuo has found less time to return to Sendai, but if not engaging in activities at regular intervals, the group can still be and is activated as elections approach. In this sense, this group has

come to bear a greater semblance to school alumni societies, and elections provide opportunities for reunions. This shift in the role of support groups in voter mobilization can be understood as a reflection of the urbanization of lifestyles in Sendai and the concurrent change in the nature of interpersonal relationships toward less mutual interference in personal affairs and less frequent day-to-day contacts.

This change in the method of voter mobilization after Kazuo's succession was gradual, yet substantial. While Kazuo, like Kiichi, has continued to garner support directly from the electorate through the *koenkai* rather than gathering votes indirectly through personal networks of local politicians, the structure of the *koenkai* has undergone significant change. Rather than the pyramidal, hierarchical structure which characterized the *koenkai* in Kiichi's days, Kazuo's organization has increasingly come to assume an amoeba-like structure, with suborganizations of various shapes and sizes coexisting on equal terms with one another, all under the direct control of Kazuo. In other words, the opportunity for direct contact between the electorate and the Diet member has grown considerably. Kazuo consciously chose to fragment and decentralize his base of support in this manner, judging that greater delegation to the lowest level in the organization of his *koenkai* would yield greater efficiency in garnering votes. Kazuo has not engaged in the traditional turf warfare strategy of dividing up and competing for control over specific areas within an electoral district with other candidates and establishing exclusive control over areas that had been won under the leadership of a single local branch leader. A single area today may give support to several candidates, with differing degrees of loyalty to each candidate.

To the alarm of Aichi-kai leaders of the elder generation, the list of supporters is less comprehensive than it was in Kiichi's day. Even Kazuo's secretaries no longer have a grasp of the entire *koenkai*, and fewer people attend Aichi-kai-sponsored gatherings. Because local *koenkai* leaders were no longer responsible for mobilizing voters, not only did participation in gatherings become more voluntary, but the prediction of actual turnout also became more difficult.

These changes in organizational form should be regarded as the result of the flexible adaptation on the part of the Aichi-kai to the rapid urbanization of Sendai. Apparently, Kazuo decided that the changing environment not only rendered existing forms of voter mobilization less effective but also made them less necessary. As a result, the structure

of the *koenkai* gradually evolved into a network-type structure, which in many ways resembled those of voluntary citizens' associations. The relationship between Kazuo and the electorate was transformed from one which consisted primarily of drinking, singing, and talking with the Diet member on visits back to the electoral district into a more urban-type, friendly relationship between the Diet member and supporters, most of whom were of the same generation as Kazuo himself.

As Kazuo came to play an increasing role in national politics and found less time to spare to return to his district, his wife came to play a greater role in maintaining and strengthening the base of support. Kazuo's wife, a modern woman with an outgoing personality, used her children's school as the focal point to cultivate her own personal network. She also initiated and ran gatherings and other public activities, including festivals, symposia, and picnics. In addition, she occasionally organized protest activities, focusing on environmental issues, and expanded her base of support among activists of citizens' movements.

Kazuo has continued visiting as many supporters as he can whenever he is back in his district. As Mitsuzuka gradually increased his stature in national politics and engagement in overt pork-barreling, Kazuo was able to enlist the support of urban, upper-middle-class voters, who detest these practices of Mitsuzuka's, as well as that of businesspeople who found such practices offensive or those who were victimized by Mitsuzuka's strategy. It did not require specialized services to attract these voters.

On the whole, Kazuo's *koenkai* became one in which participation was a major objective in itself for its members, rather than one which was directed toward the provision of personal services for the electorate. Two factors accounted for this. First, it was difficult for a rank-and-file politician like Kazuo to attract votes through pork-barreling; second, and more important, the urbanization of Sendai increasingly obliterated the need to pork barrel or provide personal services to mobilize voter support. It was primarily due to this latter factor that building a personal image and popularity became of increasingly crucial importance to Kazuo's electoral strategy.⁶ Furthermore, Kazuo himself expressed a strong interest in foreign policy, and despite being a member of the Tanaka faction, the largest and most powerful faction in the LDP, which meant that he could freely choose any vice-ministerial position that he desired, Kazuo chose the position of vice-minister for foreign affairs (a position remote from spoils distribution), and

continued to take up portfolios in the area of foreign affairs thereafter.⁷ As a result, within his own electoral district, Kazuo came to rely increasingly upon votes from Sendai to be reelected. He felt that focusing on Sendai and expanding his base of support among the emerging urban middle class would be a more effective strategy for sustaining his seat than trying to defend his traditional areas of support from Mitsuzuka's penetration.

The importance of continued loyalty from elderly supporters dating back from Kiichi's days should, however, not be underestimated. In rural areas in particular, Aichi-kai still controls leadership positions within the local Nokyo branches; small business associations of barbers, laundries, public baths, restaurants, and the like; and firefighter organizations. The deep-rooted feeling of personal obligation and loyalty toward his father-in-law Kiichi has been effectively transformed into support for Kazuo. As Kazuo's personal image recently suffered a setback following a scandal (for having allegedly received donations from Recruit Company), the role of the traditional *koenkai* in mobilizing votes has in some respects been enhanced.

In terms of financing political activities, Kazuo attempted but was largely unsuccessful in establishing a separate *koenkai* to specialize in fund-raising within his district in order to reduce his dependence upon fund-raising at the national level, based in Tokyo, which had persisted since Kiichi's days. Because running an organization like the Aichi-kai required substantial funds, Kazuo had little choice but to turn to local businesses. Instead of seeking direct financial assistance, however, Kazuo requested from these businesses, and won, personnel to work full time as his personal staff while continuing to receive their salaries from their employers. For funds, Kazuo relied primarily on fund-raising parties that he occasionally held in Tokyo. The amount that one party can raise, however, is only from two to three million yen, with the result that Kazuo has often found himself hard pressed for funds.

Shortly before the electoral reforms, Kazuo's *koenkai* counted somewhere between 170,000 to 180,000 members (70,000 to 80,000 of which were merely nominal members whose names were picked up from lists obtained from supporting corporations and other constituency groups) and managed to mobilize somewhere between 120,000 and 130,000 votes.⁸ *Koenkai*-mobilized votes seemingly accounted for less than half of the votes that Kazuo usually won in an election. Heads of villages, towns, and cities have tended to remain neutral in

national elections, refraining from overtly defining themselves as supporters of either Aichi or Mitsuzuka, from fear that the other candidate could retaliate by withdrawing support for the incumbent head and endorsing a new candidate in the next local election.

CHANGES SINCE THE ELECTORAL REFORMS OF 1994

As an LDP Diet member, Aichi Kazuo had been a member of the Takeshita faction. Because of his close ties with senior LDP member Hata Tsutomu, he joined Hata and LDP strongman Ozawa Ichiro when they left the LDP to form the Japan Renewal Party in June 1993 and later the New Frontier Party (NFP) in December 1994. The NFP absorbed the former Komeito (Clean Government Party), which was supported by the powerful lay Buddhist organization Sokagakkai. Mitsuzuka, who by this time had formed his own faction, chose to remain in the LDP. What had been an intraparty rivalry between Mitsuzuka and Aichi was transformed into a rivalry across party lines.

As a result of the electoral reforms of 1994, the former Miyagi First District was partitioned into four new single-seat constituency districts, and the city of Sendai itself was divided into two separate electoral districts. By the fall of 1995, it was decided that Aichi, who had the strongest base of support among Lower House Diet members in the former Miyagi First District, would run from the new Miyagi First District. Encompassing the most populous areas of Sendai, this district was considered to be Miyagi Prefecture's "showcase" district. Aichi's participation in the NFP had done little damage to the mobilization capacity of the Aichi-kai; conversely, Aichi now attracted new supporters who commiserated with him and his misfortune in no longer being a member of the ruling party.⁹ Because within the former Miyagi First District Aichi had consistently attracted the majority of his votes from areas that now became the new Miyagi First District, few were surprised that he was to run from this latter district.

With Aichi running from the new Miyagi First District, it was decided that Chiba Kunio, an incumbent NFP Diet member who was formerly a member of the Komeito, would run from the new Miyagi Second District. Within the former Miyagi First District, Chiba had drawn roughly the same number of votes from both the new Miyagi First and Second Districts in the previous election. The decisions that

Aichi would run from the new Miyagi First District and Chiba from the new Miyagi Second District met with little controversy. Mitsuzuka announced that he would run from the new Miyagi Third District. As a result, the only remaining candidate who had a sufficient base of support to mount a meaningful challenge to Aichi within the new Miyagi First District was Okazaki Tomiko of the Social Democratic Party of Japan (SDPJ). However, with the strength of the SDPJ rapidly waning, it was expected that Aichi would enjoy an easy road to victory in his new district.

In the new Miyagi Second District, the LDP gave its endorsement to Nakano Masashi, a Miyagi Prefectural Assembly member and a former secretary to Mitsuzuka. Nakano left the assembly as early as the spring of 1995 to concentrate on building a firm base of support in preparation for the next Lower House election. It was because Mitsuzuka chose to run from the new Miyagi Third District that Nakano could run from the Miyagi Second District. Many viewed Mitsuzuka's decision to run from neither the Miyagi First District nor the Miyagi Second District, but from the new Third District, as a defeat for a politician of Mitsuzuka's stature.

Abandoning the Sendai area would inevitably lead to the weakening of Mitsuzuka's influence over Sendai city politics, and there was speculation that Mitsuzuka would prefer to run from the new Miyagi Second District. Assuming that this was correct, it can be speculated that Mitsuzuka's decision not to run from the Second District owed primarily to his fear that Aichi and Chiba would collaborate in mobilizing voters for each other through the *koenkai* networks in their former districts, thereby reducing Mitsuzuka's prospects for reelection.¹⁰ In fact, in the election of 1996, the LDP's Nakano only narrowly managed to defeat Chiba, by a margin of merely 6,000 votes. (The final tally was 68,000 to 62,000 votes.)

From the beginning, however, many of Aichi's supporters felt a deep aversion toward the former Komeito and the Sokagakkai and were reluctant to give their support to Chiba. Several leaders of Aichi-kai, along with local politicians who belonged to the Aichi *keiretsu* (a group of linked politicians, particularly Sendai City Assembly members) openly said that they would support Nakano, arguing that "since Aichi and Mitsuzuka are now running from different districts, there should be no problem with our giving support to candidates with close ties to Mitsuzuka." Thus, from the outset, it was dubious whether mutual

cooperation in voter mobilization between the two NFP candidates, Aichi and Chiba, would actually succeed.

In the new Miyagi Third District, Mukade Ken'ichi, a Miyagi Prefectural Assembly representative and member of the Aichi keiretsu, became the NFP candidate. However, the branches of Aichi-kai in this district, deprived of their own boss (Aichi Kazuo) as their candidate, were lukewarm in their support for Mukade. In addition, because Mitsuzuka had expressed his intention to run from this district, as noted earlier, the Aichi-kai figured that Mukade had little chance of victory.

In the new Miyagi Fourth District, which had been the stronghold of Ito Soichiro prior to the electoral reforms, Aichi-kai had traditionally been weak. Aichi-kai thus did not expect to play a major role in mobilizing votes in this district. Although the NFP had hoped to endorse a candidate who had ties with the former DSP for this district, the selection of candidates encountered unexpected difficulties. It was not until September 1995 that the party finally settled upon Nitta Kazuhiro.

In May 1995, Oka Masao, a Sendai City Assembly member, took the lead in establishing a new caucus in the Sendai City Assembly. This caucus, which came to be called Global Net, announced that it would endorse Aichi in the Miyagi First District and Nakano in the Miyagi Second District. A barter arrangement was made against the alleged wish of Aichi; City Assembly members affiliated with Aichi would mobilize votes for Nakano in the Second District, and, in return, local politicians affiliated with Mitsuzuka-Nakano would mobilize votes for Aichi in the First District. Thus, a system of mutual noninterference was established between the conservative local politicians in the First and Second Districts. The result was that a general consensus emerged among the Sendai electorate that it was better to have one Diet member each from the LDP and the NFP in the Sendai area rather than elect two Diet members from the same party. This decision undoubtedly strained Aichi's relationship with the Soka-gakkai.¹¹

The selection of candidates for the single-seat constituency districts in Miyagi Prefecture was delegated completely to the local level, and the NFP national headquarters rarely intervened. In contrast, the NFP national leadership for the most part excluded local politicians from the final selection of candidates for the proportional representation in

the Tohoku block. This decision by the NFP was, above all, rooted in the fear on the part of local NFP leaders that intraparty conflict at the local level over the rankings of candidates could undermine the unity of the fledgling party. Thus, the local leaders of the former Renewal Party, the former Komeito, and the former DSP each forwarded recommendations of candidates to the national NFP headquarters, where the rankings among the candidates were coordinated and finally decided. Furthermore, the NFP deliberately delayed its decision-making over the rankings of candidates for the reason that, if the rankings were determined from early on, candidates with a high ranking would lose their incentive to campaign actively within their election districts, while the incentive of lower-ranked candidates to wage a vigorous campaign would also be undermined. NFP leaders expected that the later the announcement of candidates' rankings, the more extensive the campaigns of candidates to solidify their base of support within their election districts would be. Because the NFP did not determine the rankings of candidates early, they could not campaign on the basis of the party campaign platform.

THE ELECTION CAMPAIGNS OF 1996

Realignment in the Miyagi First District

Aichi's campaign for the Lower House election of October 1996 was organized in the form of a loose alliance between various organizations. Regarding his campaign strategy for this election, the following five organizations played significant roles.

Aichi-kai: An Increased Dependence on Local Politicians

As the election approached, Aichi asked Muto, who had long been retired from politics, to return to his staff. Although the reason for Aichi's request is unclear, Muto took control of Aichi's entire election campaign. Worried that Aichi's less-than-frequent returns to his election district placed him at a disadvantage vis-à-vis other candidates,¹² Muto embarked upon a strategy of calling upon Sendai City Assembly members and Miyagi Prefectural Assembly members to reactivate the mobilization capacity of the Aichi-kai.¹³

Muto's strategy for the elections was quite successful. On the one hand, from the perspective of local politicians, redistricting eliminated the risk of antagonizing Mitsuzuka by supporting Aichi. Thus, even local politicians within the Miyagi First District, who were affiliated with Mitsuzuka, were now free to provide support for Aichi. On the other hand, the single-seat constituency system placed a premium upon frequent contacts between grass-roots voters and koenkai leaders and thus resulted in a diminished role for Aichi-kai-affiliated group leaders, such as *chonai-kai* (semiofficial citizens' block associations) and local firefighters' organizations, who were unable to commit themselves full time to time-consuming campaign activities. This was the main reason why professional, full-time politicians came to play a more prominent role in the campaign for the Lower House election of 1996. The greater role played by local politicians also enabled campaign strategists to gain a more accurate reading of votes beforehand.

Prior to the electoral reforms, there had been a tacit division of labor between Mitsuzuka and Aichi, in that Mitsuzuka campaigned primarily through local business networks, and Aichi campaigned chiefly through the grass-roots resident networks. Both had refrained from interfering in the other's main constituency. The new electoral system, however, necessitated that both now expand into what had hitherto been the other's sacred turf. In this respect, the election of 1996 saw a significant intensification in the competition for votes at the district level. (It is also said that voters who had previously voted for Aichi out of dislike for Mitsuzuka lost their incentive to cast their votes for Aichi, now that Mitsuzuka and Aichi were running from separate districts.)

Aichi Ayako's Network

Having participated in civic groups such as those to protect the Aoba Mountain (Aobayama wo Mamoru Kai) and Banzan Mountain (Banzan 21), Aichi's wife, Ayako, had been active in environmental affairs within her husband's district. She had also initiated and run numerous cultural symposia and festivals. The contacts that she had gained through these activities provided important networks for mobilizing votes for her husband. Many of the leaders of these groups were drawn from women entrepreneurs (especially former and current members of the Junior Chamber of Commerce), local media,

and the various deliberation councils of Miyagi Prefecture and Sendai City (mostly local notables and intellectuals). The last group in particular overlapped with Okazaki's constituency, and Ayako's ties with these groups effectively barred Okazaki from monopolizing the support from these civic associations. Furthermore, in the Lower House election of 1996, Kazuo's son, Jiro, who was then preparing to take the bar exam, also took part in Aichi's election campaign. Jiro, who eventually hopes to succeed his father in his district, was welcomed warmly by the Aichi-kai. Although Aichi seldom returned to his home district, such involvement by family members compensated for his absence and provided a focus to the overall campaign.

Support from the Komei/Sokagakkai

The Komei, the local arm of the now-defunct Komeito, provided enthusiastic support for Aichi from the fear that if the Komei did not mobilize sufficient votes for Aichi, the Aichi-kai in turn would not cooperate to mobilize votes for Chiba in the Miyagi Second District. This also meant that the Sokagakkai was not particularly active in mobilizing votes for other NFP candidates who were running from other Miyagi districts where the Sokagakkai could not hope for such a barter exchange. Let us consider this point in greater detail.

Suspicion toward Aichi as a conservative politician among Komei supporters had largely dissipated by the Upper House election of 1995. His down-to-earth, unassuming personality had won over the Sokagakkai members. A relationship of mutual trust had been forged between Aichi and the Sokagakkai, a development which only a year before would have been impossible to foresee. On top of this, Aichi Kazuo and Ayako made a conscious effort to appear at as many Komei/Sokagakkai gatherings as possible. In these instances, the local Komei leaders would describe Ayako's personality and activities to the membership beforehand, after which Ayako would enter and introduce herself. Ayako became popular among Sokagakkai members, and her popularity and sincerity were further enhanced as she earned a reputation as a reliable Chiba supporter in the Miyagi Second District. The Komei camp held a total of eleven such speeches during the election campaign, each drawing an audience of between one and two hundred people. These gatherings were not cosponsored by the Komei and the Aichi-kai but were sponsored exclusively by local Komei

politicians, and the audience was comprised solely of Komei supporters. The Aichi-kai and Komei agreed that for a gathering of this size, inviting Aichi's supporters and Sokagakkai members together would result in an uneasy and rather embarrassing situation, although a joint meeting of the two organizations for an audience of about one thousand might be feasible. These considerations notwithstanding, the chief objective of these gatherings was to introduce Aichi Kazuo to local Sokagakkai members. When Kazuo was unavailable, Ayako filled in.

Furthermore, Ayako, accompanied by Chiba's wife, also paid visits to all of the prominent Sokagakkai members' homes within the district. The Komei politicians, however, did not provide Aichi with a copy of the local Sokagakkai membership list. Sokagakkai leaders apparently did not see any point in doing so.

From the Sokagakkai's point of view, a further reason to mobilize votes for Aichi was the fact that Aichi, who was responsible for negotiating with the Sokagakkai on behalf of the NFP at the national level, had played a major role in preventing the revision of the Religious Corporation Law, which the Sokagakkai had strongly opposed. For this reason, the Sokagakkai top leadership had allegedly decided to back Aichi's election campaign regardless of whether it could expect Aichi-kai's support for the Miyagi Second District in return.

In contrast to the full-fledged support the Komei threw behind Aichi's campaign in the Miyagi First District, which was at least partly motivated by hopes that the Aichi-kai would return the favor by mobilizing votes for Chiba in the Miyagi Second District, the Komei only provided half-hearted support for Mukade in the Miyagi Third District.

Yuai-kai and Affiliated Organizations

During the campaign, labor unions affiliated with Yuai-kai (the national political arm of the former Domei [Japan Confederation of Labor], which consisted mostly of private-sector unions), which had hitherto supported the former DSP and was now supporting the NFP, essentially conducted a campaign separate from the Aichi-kai to mobilize votes for Aichi. In all of the six electoral districts within Miyagi Prefecture, the basic electoral strategy of the Yuai-kai was to mobilize its members in a top-down manner, that is, without coordination with the Aichi-kai.

Hagino Koki's Support Network

Hagino Koki, a former Upper House Diet member, who had been affiliated with the DSP before joining the NFP, ran for the Tohoku proportional representation block. With Aichi's backing, he secured a relatively high position on the candidate list (he was ranked fifth) and won. Because Hagino had hopes of running for the Upper House in the next election to be held in 1998, he undertook most of his election campaign within Miyagi Prefecture. Within Aichi's First District, Hagino not only campaigned for himself but also for Aichi, in hopes that Aichi would also return the favor in 1998. Symbolically, Hagino set up his campaign headquarters in a building adjacent to Aichi's headquarters.

Hagino came from a Buddhist priest's family and enjoyed a solid base of support from the Soto sect (which made him an unattractive candidate for the Sokagakkai). At the time, he was president of Tohoku Fukushi University, and this position provided him with access to the alumni network of the university (many of whom were local government officials in the Tohoku region).¹⁴ His base of support also extended to local cultural elites, including tea ceremony and flower arrangement teachers. As these groups are normally quite difficult to reach through normal political channels, and they were certainly outside of Aichi's existing constituency, Aichi recounts that he found Hagino's support quite helpful.

Hagino had once joined forces with Okazaki when the SDPJ and the DSP had campaigned on a common front, and to a substantial degree, the support bases of these two candidates overlapped. Thus, if Hagino's collaboration with Aichi did not enable him to seize part of Okazaki's constituency, at least it was effective in slowing the expansion of Okazaki's base of support.

It is doubtful, however, whether the Aichi-kai was able to contribute to Hagino's campaign effort. At the grass-roots level, efforts to mobilize Aichi's votes for Hagino seem to have been largely unsuccessful. Within the Aichi camp, neither Kazuo nor his chief strategists seem to have paid much attention to the proportional representation districts, let alone to Hagino during the campaign. One reason for this was that Aichi deliberately downplayed his party label during his campaign. This tactic was at least partly motivated by Aichi's desire not to alienate the substantial number of voters who disliked the Sokagakkai.

In sum, in the Lower House election of 1996, five organizations played a major role in generating votes for Aichi: local politicians, the personal network centered on Aichi Ayako, the Komei/Sokagakkai, Yuai-kai-affiliated groups, and organized supporters of Hagino Koki. In addition to these five organizations and networks that took an active part in Aichi's campaign, several additional actors who provided tacit yet important support should be mentioned. These groups will be considered in turn below:

Interest Groups

Under the previous multiseat constituency system, in which several LDP candidates competed against one another within the same electoral district, it had been difficult for an interest group to openly support a particular LDP candidate. The electoral reforms effectively removed this obstacle and, as the LDP had enjoyed a comfortable lead in the preelection polls, many interest groups rushed to provide support for LDP candidates in the election of 1996. Despite this nationwide trend, deciding upon who to endorse was not a simple matter for interest groups in Miyagi Prefecture, particularly in Sendai. Although predictions for a clear LDP victory at the national level led many interest groups to endorse LDP candidates in the 1996 election, in Miyagi Prefecture, and in Sendai especially, which was the Aichi stronghold (and Chiba also had a reasonably good chance of winning a seat),¹⁵ interest group leaders were placed in a dilemma. Many expected that Aichi would remain an influential figure in the area for some time to come. As a result, LDP challenger Asano Kodo, who unexpectedly ran with the support of Mitsuzuka at the last moment, failed to enlist the support of the local interest groups.

First, the Miyagi Prefectural Nokyo, which had a membership of 180,000 and which was said to have a mobilizing capacity of between 300,000 and 350,000 votes, when including the votes of the families of its members, established local committees in each electoral district. These committees were charged with the task of deciding which candidate to endorse by the time the election campaign period officially began. Nokyo was particularly hostile to the NFP, which had proposed "a legal solution" to the huge debts of housing loan companies (*jusen*, a hotly debated issue in early 1996), which would have substantially increased the financial burden of financial institutions

associated with the Nokyo. For the same reason, Nokyo was "grateful" to the LDP, which had defeated this proposal. Thus, Nokyo undertook an active campaign for Kumagai Ichio, who was chairman of the Miyagi Prefectural Federation for Agricultural Politics and was ranked third on the Tohoku block's proportional representation list of the LDP. Although the five Nokyo committees that had been set up in the Miyagi Second to Sixth Districts all gave their endorsement to LDP candidates, in the First District, where Aichi had a firm base of support, the Nokyo decided to refrain from backing a particular candidate. Although many local Nokyo members found Aichi's harsh criticisms of the LDP's handling of the *jusen* issue distasteful, the committee also counted a substantial number of long-standing Aichi supporters among its membership, and the leader of the district Nokyo committee, deciding that he could not reconcile the two sides, staunchly resisted the attempts of the national Nokyo leaders and of leaders of the prefectural Nokyo to persuade him to endorse Asano (*Asahi Shimbun* 1996b). It should be noted that the LDP's strategy of listing a Nokyo candidate in the proportional representation district was an overwhelming success and led to the LDP landslide in the Tohoku region. Within Miyagi Prefecture alone, two of the LDP victories in the single-seat constituency districts (the Miyagi Third and Sixth Districts) can be attributed directly to this strategy (*Asahi Shimbun* 1996c).

The Miyagi Prefectural branch of the Japanese Medical Association (JMA) was also unable to reach a decision regarding whom to endorse, despite directives from the national JMA leadership to back LDP candidates. Each local branch of the JMA within Miyagi Prefecture was left to provide support to the candidate of its own choosing. The Sendai branch of the JMA formally endorsed Aichi in the First District, and Nakano in the Second District. However, with the exception of doctors who had long been active members of the *Aichi-kai*, few doctors seem to have played a significant role in the campaign.

The position of the construction industry's prefectural association in Miyagi Prefecture was to "support LDP incumbents; in districts where there were no LDP incumbent candidates in the running, each firm was free to support any candidate of its own liking" (*Asahi Shimbun* 1996a). Several of *Aichi-kai*'s leaders came from the construction industry (although their numbers had fallen from Aichi Kiichi's day), and as before the electoral reforms, these leaders campaigned actively,

both as individuals and through the construction firms they owned. However, despite Mitsuzuka's having left the Sendai area, Aichi was unable to draw the construction firms that had backed Mitsuzuka until the previous election.¹⁶

On the whole, as far as Aichi's campaign was concerned, the role of interest groups was not particularly significant. Rather, it was Aichi's ability to neutralize the power of interest groups that contributed to his victory. For instance, had the JMA's Miyagi prefectural branch given its formal endorsement to the LDP, it probably would have been more difficult for doctors associated with the Aichi-kai to continue to support him.

Top Local Government Officials

The role of the Miyagi prefectural governor and of the mayor of Sendai in mobilizing voters for the election of 1996 was also marginal. This was partly because the previous governor of Miyagi and the mayor of Sendai had both been arrested for bribery a few years before the election. However, a more important reason for the relative inactivity of these local leaders was that the race was expected to be close. The capacity of the Sendai city government to mobilize votes had been on the decline for some time. Its role in election campaigns has gradually diminished to a peripheral one, with the exception of the mayor's own election, in which the city government still undertakes vigorous campaigns to keep the incumbent mayor in office.

As the above analyses suggest, Aichi rarely raised policy issues during the electoral campaign. In previous elections, he had mobilized votes mostly through personal networks and his personal image. The last election was not an exception. This time, however, he had a few additional reasons for not raising specific policy issues. He was responsible for making party platforms as chairman of the Policy Research Council of the NFP. Ironically, this position made him more reluctant to fight the election by raising policy issues. First, when Ozawa Ichiro ran for the party presidency in late 1995, he had proposed that the consumption tax be raised to 10 percent in ten years and the income tax be reduced by one-half. Although he was elected president by overwhelming majority, his policy was shelved while deliberations for the party platforms for the 1996 general election were being made. It was because many other party leaders, including Aichi, who had supported

Hata against Ozawa in the presidential election, were afraid of a possible widespread popular reaction against the proposal to raise the consumption tax. The party advocated instead to keep the tax at 3 percent. The LDP proposed to raise it to 5 percent to reduce the huge fiscal deficit and accused the NFP of being irresponsible as well as opportunistic and inconsistent, referring to Ozawa's previous proposal.

During the NFP's presidential campaign in late 1995, Ozawa had also advocated the establishment of U.N. Police Forces as one measure of Japan's more active international contribution. Aichi was skeptical of this proposal as well. As a result, once Aichi raised specific policy issues, the difference between Ozawa and himself, that is, the president and the chairman of the Policy Research Council within the NFP, would become apparent, and he and his party would become more vulnerable to the LDP's criticism.

In addition, Aichi's specialty in policy areas included foreign and defense policies. He had advocated Japan's more assertive role, although he differed from Ozawa on specific proposals. If Aichi expressed his opinions more openly, it would stir the opposition from Sokagakkai members, particularly within the Youth and Women's Sector, which had a long tradition of participation in the peace movement and was always suspicious of the argument for a "more positive defense contribution." Therefore, Aichi relied on rather general arguments in his election speeches, such as criticism against the LDP's corrupt practices and its old-fashioned policy-making process, and thus avoided references to specific policy issues.

According to data compiled by Muto after the elections, Aichi won 45,000 votes through his campaign, in addition to the 25,000 votes mobilized by the Sokagakkai, and 7,000 by labor unions and other organizations. The figures indicated that Aichi had failed to attract new voters from Mitsuzuka's former constituency. This analysis has also been confirmed by local journalists. In retrospect, without the votes from the Sokagakkai bloc, Aichi's victory would have been a close tie with Okazaki.

Realignment in the Miyagi Second District

This section will provide an account of how the Aichi-kai campaigned for Chiba, the incumbent NFP candidate and former member of the

Komeito, in the Miyagi Second District as well as how Nakano Masashi, Chiba's challenger, campaigned in this district.

The Komei received a list of the names and addresses of about 1,800 leaders (*kanbu*) of the Aichi-kai from Aichi in February 1996, and Chiba's secretary and staff immediately began an intensive round of personal visits to these Aichi supporters. In August, when elections began to seem imminent, the Aichi-kai provided the Komei with a list of the entire Aichi-kai membership in the Second District. This list included the names of approximately 50,000 voters, although of these, around 10,000 had either moved or could otherwise not be located.¹⁷ This list was computerized and classified according to residential area. The Komei campaign staff was expanded to about 150 people, and this staff used the list to visit the households of Aichi's supporters. The Komei staff recount that they visited somewhere between 200 and 250 voters a day. Over a period of three months, the Komei also sponsored about forty local gatherings. (Sokagakkai members were not invited to these gatherings as they could safely be counted upon to vote for Chiba without being persuaded to do so through these gatherings.) Chiba himself also visited as many Aichi supporters as he could.

On Aichi's side, while some of the Miyagi Prefectural Assembly members of his keiretsu provided campaign support for Chiba, for reasons cited earlier, it became difficult for the Aichi-kai to mobilize Sendai City Assembly members on behalf of Chiba. Above all, many of the members of the Aichi-kai hesitated supporting Chiba, a member of Sokagakkai. It required much prodding and persuading on the part of Aichi-kai leaders, primarily on the grounds that Aichi and Chiba were now members of the same party, the NFP, to mobilize votes for Chiba. Aichi Ayako played a major role in this task. Although the initial reluctance of some voters toward voting for Chiba gradually diminished among Aichi-kai members as the elections approached, most Aichi-kai members who ultimately voted for Chiba did so neither out of personal support for Chiba nor from feelings of loyalty to the NFP. The principal reason for supporting Chiba in the Miyagi Second District was so that Aichi would gain the support of the Sokagakkai in the Miyagi First District.

Regarding the Yuai-kai, which had once run a common front with the Sokagakkai in elections within Miyagi Prefecture, the pattern of campaigning was essentially the same as in the Miyagi First District; the Yuai-kai ran a campaign separate from the Sokagakkai and used its own channels to mobilize voters.

Although Chiba lost the election, he drew 62,000 votes, a substantial increase from the previous election, in which he had received 28,000 votes from this area. Of these, 10,000 are estimated to have come from local politicians with ties with the former DSP (who included Sendai City Assembly members as well as several Miyagi Prefectural Assembly members) and the Yuai-kai. Chiba also attracted votes from a few conservative dissenters who were opposed to LDP policies, particularly the raising of the consumption tax rate. These figures considered, it has been estimated that the Aichi-kai mobilized between 22,000 and 23,000 votes for Chiba. While the NFP outnumbered the LDP by 10,000 votes in the proportional representation votes in this district, Chiba lost this race by 18,000 votes.

As noted earlier, there were 1,700 to 1,800 Aichi-kai leaders in the Miyagi Second District. Komei leaders recall that while they could eventually win the support of these Aichi-kai leaders, the Komei encountered insurmountable obstacles in expanding their base of support beyond them. Because of this, the Komei had not expected to win more than 20,000 votes from the 40,000 members of the Aichi-kai. (In the previous election, Aichi had won 45,000 votes in areas which became the new Miyagi Second District.)

To outline the factors that contributed to Nakano's victory, first, Nakano had built up a formidable *koenkai* organization comprising 100,000 households during his days as a prefectural assembly member and as a candidate for the Diet (Upper House). In addition, he enjoyed substantial support from local conservative politicians within the Miyagi Second District (specifically, four prefectural assembly members affiliated with Mitsuzuka and several Sendai City Assembly members who had participated in Global Net), and local construction companies (which allegedly provided personnel as well as financial assistance). Vigorous campaigning by Nakano himself (he paid extensive visits to his supporters and held numerous small-group gatherings) and shrewd negative campaigning against the Sokagakkai should also not be overlooked (and led to Nakano's sweeping victory in Izumi district, a new suburban area). His opposition against the raising of the consumption tax to 5 percent, which was in fact against the LDP platform, also proved to be popular.

The crucial factor for Nakano's victory in 1996, however, proved to be his *koenkai*. While serving as a Miyagi Prefectural Assembly member, Nakano had set his sights upon running for the Diet in the future,

and toward this goal, he had steadily built up a powerful *koenkai* apparatus. In general, the key to the success of a *koenkai* organization is the charisma and appeal of the candidates themselves (with such traits as cheerfulness or vitality), and Nakano was fortunate to possess these. In this respect, it is not particularly surprising that Mitsuzuka had already come to view Nakano as a major threat to his continued electoral success as early as ten years before, when Nakano actually ran for the Upper House, and that the relationship between the two was often strained.

In establishing his *koenkai*, Nakano paid particular attention to the rural areas within his district, for the reason that once cultivated, rural voters made for a more reliable base of support than urban voters and that, through their urban relatives, rural voters could provide a foothold to expand Nakano's base of support into urban areas as well. This strategy proved quite effective. Because pockets of rural areas still remain within the Sendai city limits, and because, as noted previously, the LDP ranked a *Nokyo* candidate on its proportional representation list, Nakano drew voters from the agricultural sector and from families of these agricultural households who lived in more urbanized areas. This also meant that Nakano had won with almost no backing from the LDP politicians in the other electoral districts. Of particular note was the fact that the former Mitsuzuka support groups, which still existed in the Sendai area, provided little or no support to Nakano.

An additional factor behind Nakano's success was that he deliberately sought to distance himself from Mitsuzuka by competing on the basis of his own personality in hopes of luring votes from former supporters of Aichi, many of whom, with memories of "Aichi-Mitsuzuka warfare" still fresh in their minds, had initially been reluctant to support Nakano. Furthermore, although Nakano had served as Mitsuzuka's secretary, many considered him not merely as a Mitsuzuka yes-man, but as a politician who was gifted with vitality and courage and possessed the potential to surpass Mitsuzuka in the future. Nakano used this image to his full advantage.

Local journalists have speculated that Nakano's success in the Sendai area would work to Mitsuzuka's disadvantage. That Nakano would represent the Sendai area in the Diet inevitably meant that Mitsuzuka's influence in the Sendai area, which Mitsuzuka had carefully built up over the years, would be eroded. For Mitsuzuka to remain an influential

figure in Sendai, it would have been better if Nakano had lost his election. If Sendai had been represented by two NFP candidates, Aichi and Chiba, Mitsuzuka could have maintained his influence as an LDP member of the district linked to Sendai after the elections. Because Nakano would have been reluctant to seize Mitsuzuka's former constituency within the Miyagi Second District, such as the Sendai construction industry, if Nakano had lost, a reasonable guess would be that Mitsuzuka would have been able to retain his power in Sendai. Whether or not for these reasons, Mitsuzuka in any case did not lend support to Nakano's election campaign, which, ironically, enabled Nakano to seize votes from Aichi's former constituency.¹⁸

CONCLUSION

Looking ahead toward the future prospects of *koenkai* restructuring in Miyagi Prefecture, attempts to incorporate the Aichi-kai into the NFP party apparatus have so far seen little success, and outside of the new Miyagi First District, the Aichi-kai seems to be in the process of disintegration. In the rural village areas, in particular, the Aichi-kai has all but ceased to exist. Aichi decided early on to shift his base of support to the Sendai area and became increasingly reluctant to run Aichi-kai-affiliated candidates in local elections outside of Sendai. He not only seems to consider it impossible to merge his *koenkai* with the NFP itself but also does not even seem to have entertained the possibility of building a prefecturewide or blockwide (Tohoku region) NFP campaign apparatus to begin with. Neither does he seem to feel the necessity of preserving his wider base of support within the former Miyagi First District for possible use for other election campaigns, such as for the Upper House or the governorship, to help future NFP candidates.

Both within Miyagi Prefecture and without, it seems likely that the existing *keiretsu* of local politicians will be realigned into the new *keiretsu* of the incumbent candidate in the new electoral districts. Following the election, Nakano expressed his confidence that he would be able to draw Aichi-kai-affiliated local politicians within the Miyagi Second District into his *keiretsu*. Within the Miyagi Third District, Mitsuzuka's district, most prefectural assembly members (particularly those from single-seat districts), including those with ties to Aichi,

have already joined forces with Mitsuzuka. (Incidentally, the two LDP candidates in the Miyagi Third and Fourth Districts, Ito and Mitsuzuka, successfully forged a barter for votes in the last election, and Ito's *koenkai* in the Miyagi Third District mobilized votes for Mitsuzuka, but the two *koenkai* remain largely outside of the control of the LDP party apparatus.) This is because it is widely believed that the single-seat constituency system strongly favors incumbent candidates, which, from the point of view of local politicians, means that there is little reason to remain loyal to Diet members who have "moved" to other election districts. In Sendai, moreover, the high turnover rate among city assembly and prefectural assembly members is also expected to accelerate this realignment.

Furthermore, as Ito announced his retirement and will not run for the next election, and with Mitsuzuka at seventy years of age and with his son most likely not to succeed him, the potential for conflict among the affiliated local politicians over who would succeed the two remains high. Nitta Kazuhiro, who ran in the 1996 election from the NFP in the Miyagi Fourth District, had been affiliated with Ito, but nevertheless accepted the NFP's offer for a spot to challenge Ito. The prospect of succession by a new generation may become a source of LDP intraparty conflict, which will lead to interparty competition.

However, the new *keiretsu* of local politicians under incumbent conservative Diet members which is currently undergoing realignment is not expected to provide a forum of cooperation for member politicians other than during national elections, and will certainly not become any stronger than the *keiretsu* of local Diet members that have previously existed. Although the realignment of various parliamentary groups within the Miyagi Prefectural Assembly is ongoing, a firm cleavage along LDP-anti-LDP lines since the days of the Hosokawa and Hata coalition anti-LDP governments remains, as well as a purely local cleavage over the distribution of official positions, the most visible of which is the competition for speaker of the assembly. In other words, realignment at the local level has been unfolding largely independently of party realignment at the national level. This partly owes to the fact that at the prefectural assembly level, the longstanding pattern of alliance formation based on the competition for the positions of assembly speaker and committee chair/vice-chair has remained undisturbed.

Chiba had, as a candidate, relied primarily upon the Sokagakkai and the Komei to amass his votes, and he did not cultivate his own

personal network. The NFP now regrets that Chiba did not develop a strong base of his own, for had he done so, he would have been less vulnerable to the negative campaigning against the Sokagakkai by the LDP.

Regarding the Sokagakkai, if it does not reconsider its close relationship with the NFP itself, then at the very least it seems unlikely that it will provide extensive campaign support to NFP candidates in future elections. The Women's Division of the Sokagakkai aside, most members of the Sokagakkai Youth Groups, the core for electoral campaigns, are employed workers who have little time to spare for election campaigns. Campaigning for elections also takes time away from Sokagakkai members for religious worship, which in turn draws criticisms from within the organization. Although the Sokagakkai is still active in local politics, there is strong indication that it is considering reducing its role in national politics. In the last election, the positions of the Komei and the Sokagakkai were not always in unison. Often the Komei seemed to want to cultivate ties with certain LDP Diet members, although maintaining a close relationship with the NFP as well. With a mobilization capacity of 50,000 votes within Miyagi Prefecture, it seems that the Komei is hoping to take on a role as balancer between the LDP and the NFP. Some have already speculated that the Komei may pursue such a strategy in the next Miyagi gubernatorial election. Reports that Sokagakkai has decided that, for future elections, it will not run candidates in the fifteen electoral districts in which incumbent Diet members of the former Komeito had been defeated in the last election (except in exceptional circumstances) seem to confirm this analysis.

On his part, Aichi seems to be looking to forge a closer relationship with Okazaki in the future, as they both would gain from cooperating to defeat an LDP candidate. Aichi thus seems prepared to give electoral support to Okazaki if she chooses to run from the Miyagi Second District in the next election or for the Upper House in 1998. This in turn would also mean that Chiba would need to build up a personal support group of his own to survive in the single-seat constituency districts.

In sum, within the NFP, the reorganization and integration of the voter mobilization schemes of the former Komeito/Sokagakkai and the former DSP/Yuai-kai seem almost impossible, for two reasons. First, the direction of future party realignment is yet unclear; second,

and more important, structural reasons, which have been outlined above, remain. As the last election indicates, it seems safe to conclude that personal koenkai organizations will continue to be the central vote-mobilization apparatus in Japanese elections for the near future.

Author's note: In July 1997, Aichi Kazuo left the NFP because of disagreements with Ozawa Ichiro, president of the party. After some time as an independent, Aichi rejoined the LDP. The LDP's active wooing of Ozawa to rejoin the party has been unsuccessful so far.

NOTES

1. To be more accurate, because the seats to be elected through proportional representation were virtually ignored in the debates concerning the effects of the new electoral system, the new system was erroneously understood by most to be one primarily based upon the single-seat constituency system, despite the fact that seats elected through proportional representation constituted 40 percent of total seats.

2. Existing analyses of voter mobilization in Japan through koenkai include: Curtis (1969), Honda (1972), and Shirakawa (1983). However, as far as I am aware, Yamada (1992) is the only existing analysis that has traced the evolution of a particular koenkai over an extended period of time.

3. In general, politicians establish another type of koenkai for fund-raising purposes separate from the koenkai for voter mobilization. However, the two are usually linked in some way.

4. However, at this time the Aichi-kai only had a list of the "leaders" (*kanbu*) of the Aichi-kai, a list which by itself numbered several thousand. It was not until Kazuo's days that the Aichi-kai drew up a full list of its membership.

5. "Ai" means "love" in Japanese.

6. Thus, the Aichi-kai evolved into a mobilization scheme comprised mostly of volunteers. This is in stark contrast to the pattern of evolution discovered by Yamada (1992) in some other koenkai, such as Hashimoto Tomisaburo's, in rural and semirural areas.

7. For his next full ministerial position, Aichi took up the portfolio of director-general of the Environmental Agency and played an active role in environmental affairs. He also served as director-general of the Defense Agency.

8. As with most membership lists of LDP koenkai, the Aichi-kai's was not a list of

full-fledged supporters. The objective of drawing up a list, at least as Aichi Kazuo saw it, was to identify targets for persuasion in an efficient manner, and thus the list included names of people who were remotely associated with the Aichi-kai.

9. The fact that Aichi left the ruling party probably weakened the interest-based nature of the Aichi-kai even further and reinforced its character as a volunteer organization. However, among his supporters, many, particularly those of the elderly generation, believed that Aichi was still a member of the LDP.

10. But there were certain advantages for Mitsuzuka, who was particularly sensitive to the interests of the construction industry, in running from the Miyagi Third District. This district comprised the southern part of Miyagi Prefecture, where several large-scale construction projects were under consideration at the time, including plans to expand Sendai Airport into a full-scale international airport. The area has also been listed as a possible site where central governmental agencies could be relocated to ease the overcrowding of Tokyo.

11. Around this time, a consensus was beginning to form among conservative Sendai City Assembly members that the split between the conservatives into the LDP and the NFP (or, more accurately, the split between the Aichi and the Mitsuzuka keiretsu) within the Sendai City Assembly made little sense. This marked the beginning of a conservative-conservative coalition at the city level, an opportunity that was undoubtedly created by Mitsuzuka's abandonment of the Sendai area and the LDP's endorsement of Nakano (who had been affiliated with but who nevertheless distanced himself from Mitsuzuka). Another reason for the emergence of this new intra-city assembly coalition was that local politicians were becoming increasingly reluctant to be placed under the control and the pressure of any particular national Diet member. That Sendai became an ordinance-designated city further reinforced the autonomy of city assembly members; it obliterated the keiretsu-type relationship between the city assembly members and prefectural assembly members (which had not been particularly strong to begin with), and placed them on a more equal footing.

12. Aichi's premise for not returning frequently to his election district was that, for public relations purposes, it was far more effective to act like a prominent statesperson and to present an image of a politician busily occupied in Tokyo rather than to take on Okazaki of the SDP/Democratic Party directly within his home district.

13. Sugawara Toshiaki, a Sendai City Assembly member and former Aichi Kazuo secretary, took the lead in mobilizing the Sendai City Assembly members through Global Net.

14. Several commentators have questioned whether the Soto sect votes actually helped Aichi and/or the NFP. Although the Soto sect voters were loyal supporters

of Hagino, for religious reasons it was not always easy to convince them to vote for the NFP, of which Sokagakkai was a major constituency, in the proportional representation district. Mobilization of Tohoku Fukushi University alumni was more successful.

15. In Miyagi Prefecture, the NFP actually garnered more votes than the LDP in the proportional representation votes, albeit by a slim margin. Here, the NFP came in first place with 30.76 percent of the votes.

16. The Sokagakkai is said to have cultivated close ties with the construction industry through the construction of its buildings, but the details regarding this relationship remain unknown.

17. As mentioned in note 10, the Aichi-kai membership list did not distinguish between committed and uncommitted supporters, and thus it was quite different from the membership list of the Komei. For this reason, the Komei was at first confused by the Aichi-kai membership list they were given.

18. Whether due to the conflict with Mitsuzuka or in hopes of preserving his amicable relationship with Aichi, Nakano remained undecided for about two weeks after the election about whether to join the Mitsuzuka faction or not to join any faction at all. In the end, he joined the Mitsuzuka faction.

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