

# Japanese Interest Groups in Electoral Process: Their Presence in the Upper House Election

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## 1. Introduction

People participate in politics either because they want to do so or they are mobilized by others. Mobilization by political leaders or organizations is crucial to political participation (Rosenstone and Hansen 1991). And especially in Japan, participation to election has been understood as a result of mobilizing voters by various organizations. Such mobilized voters are called as “organized vote”, and many studies see mobilization of organized votes were central in Japanese electoral campaign (Richardson 1967; Curtis 1971; Otake 1997; Park 2000). The importance of organized votes was emphasized in the Lower House election under SNTV system until 1993, and its significance is still believed after the electoral system has changed to mixed-member system. For example, Tanaka et.al. (2009) explains LDP’s defeat in 2009 general election by the decline of organized votes that has long supported LDP.

Organized vote is a mixture of politicians’ localized personal organizations, party organizations, and interest groups. Among these, politicians’ personal organizations has been studied mainly as the tool of voter mobi-

lization. Other types of organizations, local party organizations and interest groups, are less studied in the context of electoral studies. One reason why these organizations have not studied could be the difficulty to apply refined methods to study them. Most of successful studies with refined methods usually dissolve group organization to abstract constituency of politicians (Tatebayashi 2004; Hirano and Ting 2015).

This paper investigates the electoral activity of Japanese interest groups in the 21st century. It is widely believed that Japanese interest groups are reducing their power in the 21st century, but the situation is a little more complicated than simple decline when watching the electoral arena. In sections below, I take a general view of Japanese interest groups in electoral process, describing the data of group electoral activities, and what factors made current status of groups. This paper will employ description with less refined data, for the purpose of perceiving the organizational aspects of interest groups.

## **2. Japanese interest groups in the electoral process**

Interest groups play various roles in elections (Rozell et.al. 2012). They provide votes, campaign staffs, money, or candidates to political parties. They seek to realize their interests by influencing party's policy or personnel, and election provides such a chance for groups. In general, there is the exchange of votes and policy in electoral process, between parties and interest groups.

Also in Japan, interest groups participate vigorously in electoral process in various level (Tsujiyama 2002, 2010). At national level, business

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groups have been provided donation for electoral campaign. Large membership associations are source of organized vote for political parties, especially labor unions were once the source of leftist party MPs (Matsushita 1961). At local level, small groups and local organization of nationwide groups are organized into individual politician's support organization or local party organization.<sup>(1)</sup> Groups supplement party organization in electoral campaign. In highly mobilized Japanese election, numerous interest groups have been involved in the electoral process.

While interest groups perform crucial role in electoral process, most studies after 2000 point out the decline of group activity and influence. On Japanese interest groups in general, Mori and Kubo (2014) argue that the universe of interest groups is gradually shrinking, based on several surveys. Their study finds the decline of group membership, and group affiliation is especially low among the younger. And many studies observe interest groups became less active and less influential in political process in the 21st century (Muramatsu and Kume 2006, Muramatsu 2010). The decline of membership-based political organization is a universal phenomenon (van Biezen and Poguntke 2014), the similar situation is true in Japan.

More specifically, on interest group activity in the electoral arena, studies also point out the decline of interest groups. Large and politically active groups can mobilize less votes than before (Kollner 2002; Mori 2008). Reed (2011) argues that the most fundamental change in Japanese electoral environment is the decline of the “organized vote”, or an extreme

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(1) In local politics, local interest groups are important constituency for governors, mayors, or local assemblymen. But these local politicians are excluded from this paper's coverage. This paper focus on groups concerning to MP's constituency activities.

view argues that the policy triangle represented by the former bureaucrat LDP politicians backed by interest groups “has almost completely been erased” in agricultural policy domain (Mulgan 2011). But on the other hand, Maclaughlan (2014) argues that interest groups will keep their power in spite of organizational decline because political parties lack the organization for mobilization thus they will be dependent on groups in electoral campaign.

### **2.1 approaching to the electoral activity of interest groups**

Studies agree with the decline of Japanese interest groups, but there are several questions. If there is decline of interest groups, what kind of groups became less active? To what degree do interest groups decrease their activity or influence? Or are they still active? We roughly know the phenomenon, but the knowledge about changing interest group activity is not organized enough.

The findings of the studies referred above are based on either survey research or case study. Survey research is good for understanding the overall tendency or the whole picture of interest group politics. But it is difficult to relate survey result to election data. Survey unravels the group attitude to election and the group activities in the electoral process, but does not tell what causes the attitude or activities of groups at certain point. Case study can identify what the change is and what factors explain the change. But they miss the overall tendency or change over time, because they might be study of single election (Kollner 2002) or study of two or three important groups (Maclaughlan 2014).

For making additional finding and better understanding of Japanese interest group in the electoral process, this paper employs an alternative way.

Among various group activities in electoral process, this paper focuses the group activity in the proportional representation district of the Upper House (the House of Councilors) election using candidate data and election results.

There are several reasons to study the Upper House election. First, the PR districts of the upper house are quite large in size, that politicians' personal organizations cannot work well. Consequently, interest groups with nationwide organization play crucial role in the campaign and voter mobilization. Secondly, in the Lower House general elections with small districts, politicians' personal mobilizing organizations (kouenkai) stand at the center of campaign and mobilization. And there is no clear boundary between kouenkai, party local organization, and interest groups, and all of them have the overlapping membership. So in the general election, it is difficult to identify the interest group activity in the electoral process, separate from other organizations. While in the Upper House election, identification of group activity is easier especially in the PR district, with little organizational overlapping. By using election data, this paper examines the changing trends of interest group activity over time. The scope of the paper is limited, but it seeks to understand one aspect of Japanese interest groups, by limiting the scope of investigation.

## **2.2 the electoral systems of Japanese Upper House and interest groups**

In Japanese Upper House (the House of Councilors), mixed-member electoral system is adopted to elect the member of the House. People vote both SNTV local district and PR national district separately. In local district, basically 47 prefectures are used as the districts,<sup>(2)</sup> and 1 to 6 MPs are elected

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(2) In 2019 the number of districts decreased to 45 due to merger.

from each district under SNTV system. National district is a single nationwide district with 48 (formerly 50) seats elected by proportional representation. Three different types of electoral systems have been used in national district. SNTV system with 50 seats was used from 1947 to 1980, then closed list proportional representation (CLPR) system was used from 1983 to 1998. In 2001 open list proportional representation (OLPR) system, the current electoral system, was adopted.

Under current OLPR system, there is no fixed rank in the PR list of each party before the poll, and voters can vote to either party or candidate in the list. The seats of PR district are distributed to the parties on the basis of the total votes to party and their candidates. And the rank of candidates in the list are ordered by the votes that each candidate gained. The more votes a candidate gets, the higher rank he or she gets.

The national (PR) district is too large in geographical or constituency size to employ personal support organization (kouenkai) used by candidates in lower house campaign. So other device for gathering votes is needed in the national district. One device is to mobilize constituents via organized groups with large membership, such as trade associations or labor unions. So parties have depended on interest groups to mobilize their members for voting. Numerous organized groups are mobilized in Japanese elections, but the mobilization is more direct in the national district of Upper House election. Interest groups not only provide votes for parties but also field their own candidates in the party lists.

Interest groups participate in the PR district election of Japanese Upper House in two ways. One is to recruit candidate from their members and to have their name put in the affiliated party's list. Traditionally labor

Japanese Interest Groups in Electoral Process: Their Presence in the Upper House Election unions have provided candidates to JSP/SDP, DSP, DPJ, and their successors. And the officials of professional groups have run from LDP. The other way is to sponsor candidate who was bureaucrat, worked in the ministry in relation to group's interests and activities. Usually this type of candidates came from so called "economic ministries" engaging the planning and implementation of economic policy. And in this type of candidacy, several groups may jointly sponsor a candidate. Sponsored former bureaucrats have run from LDP, the long governing party. But during 1990s, after the split of LDP and the period of political reorganization, some bureaucrats exceptionally run from New Frontier Party or Liberal Party, short-lived opposition party.

### **3. Interest Groups in the Upper House Election, 1983–2019**

In the following part, I examine the changing electoral activities of interest group by using several data about the Upper House elections.

The data includes the numbers of group-backed candidates (and winners among them) running from national district in each Upper House election from 1983 to 2019, the name of groups supporting those candidates, the type of groups,<sup>(3)</sup> and the type of candidate (group official or former bureaucrat).

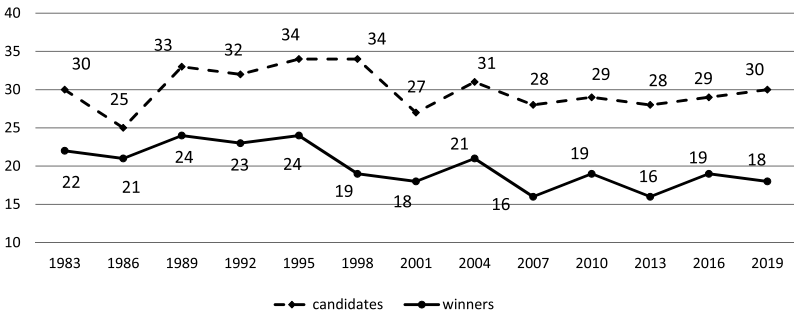
On the other hand, the data does not include candidates with less direct relationships to interest groups. Almost all politicians are more or less backed by organized groups, but to identify all support relationships between candidates and groups is impossible. So the data is limited to

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(3) Not shown in this paper.

the case that candidates have direct and visible relationship to the support groups. And there are cases that groups support former bureaucrat candidate with little direct interest or benefit, because the candidates' mother ministry mobilizes groups by the various relationships. Such cases are also excluded from the data. And the biggest exception is CGP. The data excludes CGP and its sponsor Soka Gakkai, because the relationship among them is not ordinary one between political party and interest group. Because of these exclusion, this data shows the minimum of interest groups' electoral activities.

Figure 1 Group sponsored candidates and winners, 1980-2019



### 3.1 the number of candidates

Figure 1 shows the number of group sponsored candidates/winners in Upper House elections from 1983 to 2013. In each election there have been around thirty group sponsored candidates since 1983, and the number of winners have been around twenty. They have been relatively successful to secure seats. Because they had generally higher ranks in the list under the CLPR system, and were pushed up their rank by the organized vote under the OLPR system.

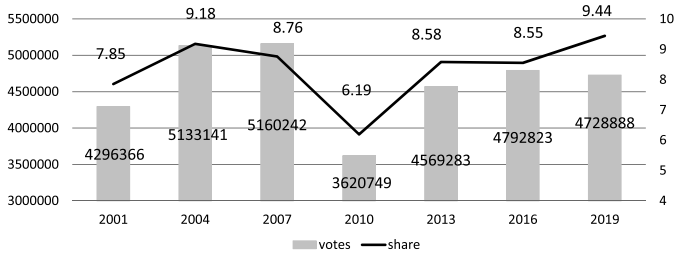


Major parties have located group sponsored candidates in PR district. LDP has fielded around 15 candidates sponsored by various groups. Center-left opposition parties had the candidates from labor unions, and their numbers were around 12 every election since 1983. Most groups field their member from one party as long as the party persists, and only a few groups switch their support during the DPJ government. In 1950s Japanese interest groups were said to be organized along the party line (Ishida 1961), and it is true of current groups at least in the electoral support.

While party-group relationship shows much continuity from the 1955 system, there is a change that thought to be important. The numbers of candidates and winners are decreasing in 2000s, and this decreasing is regarded as serious one by politicians, group leaders, or researchers, showing the loss of group power. Average number of candidates in each election is 31.3 in 1980s and 1990s and 28.7 in 2000s (8.3% decrease), and average number of winners are 22.2 and 18.5 (17.7% decrease).

It is difficult to judge whether these decreasing is significant or not. The degree of decreasing might be serious, or might not be so much. It seems that the number of group sponsored candidates and winners are not declining significantly, even if the organized vote of interest groups are in decline. For example, in 2019 election, 18 out of 48 winners in PR district are group sponsored candidates. This figure is more than 17 seats that 2nd party CDP got on the whole. Some may see interest group decreasing their electoral power, but at least interest groups are still significant as the source of candidates for major parties. And well-known groups keep the seats of their representatives in the Diet.

**Figure 2 Total votes of group candidates in each elections, and their share among all PR votes**



### 3.2 the votes

Figure 2 shows the total votes that group sponsored candidates got in each elections after 2001, and their share in all votes in PR district, under the OLPR system. It is the sum of votes that interest groups mobilized their member for their sponsored candidates.

The total votes are the least in 2010, when DPJ was in power. Many groups could not decide which party to support, and some groups did not field their candidates or support no party, so less groups mobilized their member in this election. So the total votes of group sponsored candidates considerably dropped in 2010, but the votes recovered in 2013 election under LDP government. In most recent 2019 election, total vote of group candidate got was 4,728,888. This was above the vote JCP (the 5th party) got in PR district.<sup>(4)</sup>

The interesting point is that the ups and downs of group votes are larger than the ups and downs of voter turnout. Votes from interest groups tend to be regarded as stable, but in fact various political events influence the mobilization efforts by groups election by election. As a result group

(4) JCP got 4,483,411 votes in PR district.

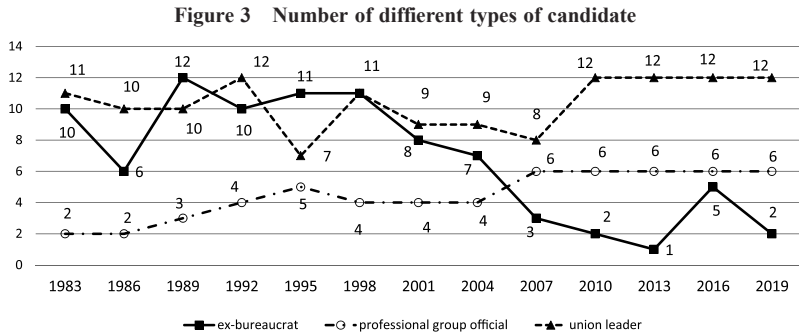
members vote more in one election, and vote less in another election. And despite these ups and downs in votes, the numbers of candidates or winners shows relative stability as shown Figure 1.

Some studies compare the vote for the candidate sponsored by particular group in OLPR election to the vote for the former candidate sponsored by the same group in SNTV national district, and point out the great decline of organized vote (Kollner 2002; Reed 2011). But unlike former SNTV national district, current OLPR system enables voters to choose voting to either party or candidate. The majority of voters choose to vote to party, and group sponsored candidates have around 30 percent share of votes among all candidate votes, and around 8 percent share among all PR votes.

### 3.3 the type of candidates

The most remarkable change is observed in the type of candidates. Figure 3 shows the change over time of three major types of candidate; former bureaucrat, professional group official, and labor union leader.

The numbers of former bureaucrat candidates were almost persistent under CLPR system, but shows almost linear decreasing after 2001 election.



In 1980s and 1990s around 11 former bureaucrats ran for each election, but only one candidate in 2013. In 2016 LDP fielded five former bureaucrats, but in 2019 the number dropped to two.

Meanwhile, total number of group sponsored candidates did not decrease significantly as shown in Figure 1. Other candidate groups in PR district have kept their numbers in the same period. Labor union leaders, another numerical candidate group in PR district, have kept around 7 to 12 candidates every election. And professional groups such as Japan Medical Association or Japan Pharmaceutical Association are still active in electoral politics, placing their officials in the elections.

Figure 3 shows that change in interest groups' electoral activity does not uniformly occur to all groups. Some groups changed more than other groups did. If there is something changing, it occurred to the former bureaucrat candidates and their sponsor groups. In the electoral arena, not all interest group became less active, but there is a difference in degree among groups. What is thought as the retreat of interest groups from electoral process is actually the decline of former bureaucrat candidates and their sponsor groups.

The reason why this change is often regarded as serious one, lies in the way that groups support the former bureaucrats. Majority of former bureaucrats received the votes from two or more groups. So if one former bureaucrat does not run from PR district, three or five groups may exit from campaigning in PR district. So the decreasing of group number engaging electoral activities in PR district is much larger than the decreasing of candidates. That makes serious perception of group decline, though the votes groups provide in PR district do not decrease so much.

## **4. Factors Influencing the Change**

Previous section shows that most striking change in electoral activities of interest groups is the sharp decline of former bureaucrat candidates. Many interest groups cease to sponsor the retired bureaucrats from the ministry which has close relationship to their interest. What factors influence the change in interest group activity in the Upper House election ?

### **4.1 organization, institution, and policy**

One possible explanation is the decline of groups itself that have sponsored former bureaucrats. The organizational decline in membership or leadership may lead to the less vote mobilizing ability, and results in less votes in election. For example, in case of construction industry, the most “political” industry, the number of constructors was about 601,000 in 1999, but 468,000 in 2018. Construction industry sponsored three or four former bureaucrats in each Upper House election in 1990s, but now only one candidate is sponsored in 2010s. It is believed that this decay is due to the decline of various construction groups.

Surely surveys tell that the organization of interest groups became weaker than before. But there is a difference among the groups sponsoring the candidates. Sectors such as construction industry experienced serious decline after mid-1990s, but the other groups keep their organizations in areas as agriculture or postal service (Maclaughlan 2014). There is surely the decline of organization, but the decline of former bureaucrat candidates exceeds the organizational decline of sponsor groups. Organizational decline

may matter, but it is not enough to cause the change observed above.

Other plausible factors are policy change and institutional change. During 2000s, distributive policy for traditional LDP supporter groups have been reduced drastically. This policy change weakened organized support to LDP and its former bureaucrat candidates. And in the same period there was the institutional changes, including the electoral system of the Upper House. The introduction of OLPR system to PR district changed the institutional environment that parties, candidates, and interest groups face. New electoral system lowered the value of former bureaucrat candidate for LDP and interest groups. These two changes had distinct effect but together brought about the change in group activities in the electoral process.

#### **4.2 the decline of distributive policy**

Policy change has more direct influence to the decrease of former bureaucrat candidates. The organizational decline referred before also should be understood as a consequence of this policy change, rather than thinking organizational decline as a cause.

LDP have used various distributive policy programs to secure support for them (Calder 1988). These programs were delivered through the various organizations to their members, and LDP make these organized beneficiaries their supporters (Nonaka 2008). LDP has secured support of various interest groups through the distribution of interests. Around these distributive programs, many subgovernments of LDP politicians, administrative agencies, and interest groups have been formed.

Concerning to these kinds of policy areas, interest groups have sponsored the former bureaucrats running for the Upper House, because groups

expected rewards for backing candidates from the ministries that the candidates came from. Typically, these candidates had worked for the ministry which provides some kind of public works. In the era of CLPR, many candidates were from those ministries. Groups sponsored those candidates, and the ministries distributed pork barrel policy programs to the sector that sponsored their OBs. Groups secure distributive policy benefit in exchange for sponsoring former bureaucrat candidates. But when there were less policy benefit and the exchange did not function, groups lost the reason to sponsor former bureaucrats in election.

In the first decade of 21st century, pork barrel policy was drastically cut down. For example, consider the case of agricultural land improvement program that Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries does. It is a public work in farm land, and done by the local land improvement associations with the subsidies from MAFF. It is regarded as a typical pork barrel program in Japanese rural area. Figure 4 shows the land improvement budget of MAFF in each upper house election year, and the votes of former the MAFF bureaucrat backed by National Federation of Land Improvement Associations. The land improvement budget decreased sharply in 2000s, and the vote of former MAFF bureaucrat decreased in parallel till no candidacy in 2010. The budget amount was recovering after mid-2010s, National Federation of Land Improvement Associations sponsored former bureaucrat again in 2016 and 2019.<sup>(5)</sup>

The land improvement case is simple one, because there is one organization supporting one former bureaucrat candidate concerning one govern-

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(5) The amount of land improvement expenses is still restrained in annual budget, but there are extra expenditures in supplementary budget.

**Figure 4 vote and pork in the agricultural land improvement program**

	2001	2004	2007	2010	2013	2016	2019
Budget of rural infrastructure improvement (100 million yen)	10,765	8,345	6,747	2,129	4,267*	3,952*	5,184*
votes former MAFF candidate got /result	207,867 win	167,350 win	128,199 lose	no candidacy		182,467 win	137,502 win

\*including supplementary budget amount of previous fiscal year

mental program. Other public work programs such as road construction, river maintenance, or port improvement contains multiple groups from construction industry to automobile industry, and sponsorship relations are more complex. But there is general tendency that the reduction of these public works spending and the decreasing of former bureaucrats' vote seem to occur in parallel.

### 4.3 the effect of electoral system change

In addition to the distributive policy cuts, the electoral system change had distinct effects for the fortune of former bureaucrat candidates. In 2001, OLPR system was adopted for the Upper House election. The feature of Japanese OLPR system has two separate effects to the interest group activity in the PR district.

Current OLPR system permits voters to vote either to party or to candidate, while former CLPR system did not allow voting to candidate. Then under OLPR system voters can select candidate they prefer, and the votes each party gains contain both party vote and personal vote to candidates. Candidates may get support due to their individual characteristics, and such candidates are desirable for parties because they increase party's vote gains by their personal vote. Parties need candidates who have attribute



Japanese Interest Groups in Electoral Process: Their Presence in the Upper House Election that provide voters incentives for personal vote in OLPR system (Shugart et.al. 2005). Matthew Shugart conceptualize such attribute as “Personal Vote Earning Attributes (PVEA)”, and supposes mainly localized politicians as candidate with PVEA (Nemoto and Shugart 2013).

But there are other types of candidates with PVEA, such as nationwide famous celebrities or interest group leaders. Members of interest group may vote their leader even if they do not support the party, because the candidate belongs to same organization with them. In respect to PVEA, former bureaucrat is not so desirable for group sponsored candidate. He is not a member of sponsor group, though most of bureaucrats have the status of group official nominally. He would attract group members less, compared to the original group leader.

In fact, two large interest groups ceased to sponsor former bureaucrat, and instead they selected their member as their candidate. Japan Agricultural Cooperatives (JA), one of most strong interest groups supporting LDP, had supported former MAFF bureaucrats in the Upper House elections. But JA did a primary to decide for the Upper House candidate before 2007 election, because the group realized that former bureaucrat candidate did not attract their member well. The winner of the primary, Toshio Yamada, was an official of the peak association of JA, and retired MAFF bureaucrat lost the primary. In 2007 Yamada gained 300,000 more votes than the JA backed ex-MAFF candidate got in 2004. Another strong interest group, Zentoku, the group of commissioned post masters, also had sponsored former bureaucrats in the Upper House election. But they also selected the candidate from their member in 2013 election.<sup>(6)</sup>

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(6) Zentoku chose former bureaucrat as their candidate in 2016 election.

If there is no direct pork barrel reduction, personal feature of OLPR system makes former bureaucrats less desirable as candidates in PR district. This personal vote problem occurred to the groups that sponsored former bureaucrats. Labor unions or professional groups do not face this problem, because they have selected their group member as the sponsored candidate. So these groups maintain candidacy as before.

#### 4.4 another effect of OLPR system

OLPR system has another effect to the group activity in the Upper House election. The decrease of distributive policy caused the retreat of groups sponsoring candidates from public work ministries. But the retreat of pork oriented group did not result in the decline of the whole group votes or the numbers of groups in PR district. There is new entry to electoral process by different groups.

In older system such as SNTV national district and CLPR district, only large interest groups could field their member as a candidate. It was necessary more than 600,000 votes to win in the SNTV national district.<sup>(7)</sup> And under CLPR system, group size mattered to secure safe rank in the list. This group size problem was one reason that former bureaucrat candidates developed. Smaller groups had to sponsor one candidate jointly to secure their representative in Diet.

OLPR system loosened the threshold for groups to enter the electoral process. This system allows voter choose to vote to either party or candidate. Most voters vote to party, not to candidate, because to evaluate

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(7) In the 1980 Upper House election, first loser in national district gained 627,272 votes.

Japanese Interest Groups in Electoral Process: Their Presence in the Upper House Election candidates needs too much information cost for ordinary voter. In fact, 34.6% of voters voted for individual candidate in 2001 election, and the vote cast for candidates dropped to 25.0% of all votes in 2019. As a result, the candidates can secure the seat with much less votes under OLPR system.<sup>(8)</sup> About 120,000 votes would be necessary to win, and this is the size of ordinary occupation based interest groups with nationwide organizations. So groups formerly impossible to field their member in national or PR district, are now able to enter the electoral process and put their member as candidate.

Further, OLPR system changed parties' incentive for candidacy. There is a pool of votes, the all votes cast for the candidates on party list are summed as vote for the party. And unlike SNTV system, the individual candidate does not interfere each other in collecting votes. Under this institutional setting, it is rational for parties to field as much candidate as possible to maximize the total votes (Bergman et. al. 2013). So parties encourage their affiliated groups to run their member as a candidate. As a result of this process, new groups entered into the electoral process of the Upper House PR district. That is why the number of groups and the votes do not decrease after old pork oriented groups' retreat from PR district.

Newcomers are generally smaller professional groups such as clinical examiner or radiology technician, and their officials run from mainly LDP. While construction industry groups are exiting from electoral process with the reduction of public works, groups concerning welfare state enters. This shows that groups receiving benefits from government policy have strong concern for political representation of their interest. It is generally difficult for newer groups to win the seat, but it is possible when the affiliated party

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(8) The winner with least vote in OLPR system gained only 11,475 votes.

gains big victory.

## 5. Conclusion

We know a lot about the organization centered feature of Japanese election and the decline of organized votes after 2000. But we do not know much about the relationship between individual phenomena. In this paper, I tried to organize the facts and show a better understanding of the interest groups' electoral activities in the Upper House election.

My argument is summarized as follows. From the data of group sponsored candidates and the votes cast for them in the Upper House elections, the decline of group activities should be understood as the decline of former bureaucrat candidates sponsored by groups. There are two reasons why this sponsorship has diminished in the 2000s. First, the distributive policy cuts in the 2000s dissolved the exchange of votes and benefits. Facing spending cuts, the groups who was beneficiaries of distributive policy broke up the sponsorship to former bureaucrat candidates and left the electoral process. Second, the electoral system of the Upper House PR district has changed from CLPR to OLPR in 2001. OLPR system permits personal vote, but former bureaucrats did not have the attribute to earn personal vote from group members. So non-pork beneficiary groups also replace bureaucrat with group official as their candidate. These effects do not work in the case of labor union or professional groups, then the change should not be understood as universal one. OLPR system also has features that enables smaller groups to enter the electoral process and run their candidates. So after the exit of former bureaucrats and pork beneficiary groups, there comes new smaller

Japanese Interest Groups in Electoral Process: Their Presence in the Upper House Election groups into the electoral process. As a result, the group backed candidates and their vote gains do not decrease so much on the whole.

This persistence of groups' commitment to electoral politics is not congruent with the findings of former studies arguing the decline of groups. This difference comes from the focus of the research. This paper focus on the interest groups acting with their own candidacy in the Upper House election. Such activity is relatively high degree of political activity for groups, and the participants are only small part, possibly the peak of numerous interest groups in Japan. In this sense, this paper examines only a limited part of the various electoral activities of interest groups.

In the 2000s in Japan there was widespread antipathy toward interest politics, and distributive policy has been drastically reduced. The bottom period of interest group politics would be around 2010. Many studies argued that interest groups were retreating from politics, including electoral process. But in the electoral arena, there are PR district of the Upper House, and political parties depend on the organized votes of interest groups to secure their seats in PR district. And there are so many groups that their occupational fortunes depend on political decision and thus seeking political influence. There are always groups with competence and will to participate in the electoral process, even if most of groups suffer from their decline of resources or influence.

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