

# A Comparative Analysis of British and Japanese Politics focusing on the turnout in elections

Hiroshi Nakamura

## Contents

Introductory remarks

I The turnout in national and local elections in Britain

II Those in Japan

III Arguments about the causes of the low turnout in Britain

IV Examination of these

V Causes of high turnout in Japanese 'rural' areas

VI Comparison between Britain and Japan

## Introductory remarks

- (1) The facts: The difference in turnout between national and local elections in Britain is fairly big. Whereas in Japan it is negligible. The disparity between them is wide.
- (2) What causes this disparity?
- (3) Some analysis and a hypothetical answer. (I have not yet found all the necessary data, and may not be able to find it. Furthermore I do not have a computer with me here. Today I will present a report with the minimum data necessary without using complicated statistical figures.)

## I Turnout in national and local elections in Britain

- (1) Turnout in national elections (national elections in this report indicate the lower house elections not only in Britain but also in Japan).

The average turnout of the last five general elections is 74.9%. That of the post Second World War general elections is 76.6%.

### 1 The electoral system

A single member constituency system is operating. A plurality is required to win a seat. (A different electoral system is operating in Northern Ireland which is excluded from this report.)

### 2 Difference according to the region

The difference according to the region is small. (78.1% in England, 75.4% in Scotland and 79.7% in Wales in the 1992 General Election) and comparatively small in the 24 regions. (The lowest is 69.3% of Inner London. The highest is 80.9%.) The difference by constituency, however, is rather big. The lowest turnout is 53.9%. The average of the lowest ten is 58.3%. The highest is 86.1%. The average of the highest ten is 85.6%.

This difference however seems to be irrelevant to the population density of the constituencies. It seems to be dependent rather on marginality of seats. Marginality indicates the degree of the keenness in the competition. One can estimate it from the margin in the number of votes between the successful candidate and the runner-up.

The turnout is low in a constituency where Labour is domi-

nant and the margin is big as the result. The turnout is high in a constituency with a small margin. However the turnout is not low in the Tory-dominant constituencies.

(2) Turnout in local elections

A two tier system is operating except for some areas (London and the Metropolitan areas). The upper tier is called a county council and the lower tier is called a district council.

1 The competence of the county council

A kind of council executive system operates in the county council. It does not have the head elected directly by the residents.

2 The system of county council elections

A single seat constituency system identical with the system for the national election operates. They hold elections simultaneously every four years.

3 The turnout of the whole country

The turnout all around the country is about 40% in every unified election.

4 The difference by region

One can observe the same tendency as that of the national elections mentioned above (1)-2.

5 The competence of the district councils

The district councils also do not elect their heads by a direct vote of the residents. A kind of council executive system is operating also in this tier.

6 The system of the district council elections

A single seat constituency system identical with that for county council elections operates. Some councils hold elections for every constituency every four years simultaneously. Other

councils hold a partial renewal election almost every year simultaneously. London Boroughs use a multi-seat system. However they can cast the same number of ballots as seats. Substantially a single seat system is operating. (In Britain electors vote not for a candidate but for a party as I mention shortly.)

The differences in the legal restrictions between the national elections and the local ones are small. The differences in those between the county and the district are negligible.

7 The turnout of the whole county

The turnout all around the country is about 40% in every unified local election, except for the 1979 election which was held on the same day as General Election.

8 The difference by region

The same tendency seems to be observed as that of the national elections mentioned above(1)-2. However the quantity of data is very large. An accurate calculation would be time-consuming to make.

(3) The difference in the turnout between national and local elections

The turnout in national elections is approximately 75% on average. Those of the local elections are 40% on average. The difference is about 35%.

## II Turnout in the national and local elections in Japan

(1) Turnout in the national elections

The average turnout of the last five general elections is 70.7%. That of the post Second World War general elections is

72.3% (excluding the 1946 GE).

1 The electoral system

A multi-member constituency system has been operating. However the elector votes for only one candidate. (A new system based on a single-member constituency system plus a proportional representation system is due to be introduced from the next general election.)

2 The difference by areas

The difference by regions is rather big. The turnout of the sparsely populated areas is high. That of the densely populated areas is low. The turnout of the 'rural' areas (ex-rural areas in the strict sense) is high. That of the urbanized areas is low.

The turnout of the highest prefecture in 1993 is 82.6%. That of the lowest is 60.1%. The highest 5 in average of the latest three general elections are SHIMANE (85.3%), TOTTORI (81.2%), FUKUI, SAGA and NIIGATA (all 80.7%). Those of the lowest are KANAGAWA (63.0%), CHIBA (64.0%), OSAKA (64.6%), SAITAMA (65.0%) and TOKYO (65.1%).

The turnout of the highest constituency in 1993 is 84.7%. That of the lowest is 59.4%. The average of the highest 10 constituencies in the latest three general elections is 83.8%. The average population density of these 10 constituencies is 25.5%. The average ratio of the workers in the primary sector is 17.1%. The turnout of the lowest 10 is 60.1%. The counterparts are respectively 96.5% (density) and 0.7% (primary sector).

Marginality does not appear to be a significant factor. However it does not result as in the identical form as in the single seat constituency system.

(2) Turnouts in local elections

A two tier system operates. The upper tier is called prefectural government and the lower one is called municipal (city, town and village).

1 The competence of the prefectural assembly

A kind of presidential system operates. The governor elected directly by the residents dominates policy making. The influence of the assembly is small.

2 The system of the prefectural assembly election

A multi-member constituency system operates in most areas. Electors vote for one candidate. A single seat system operates exceptionally in some rural areas. They hold the whole election every four years simultaneously, apart from several prefectures.

3 Turnout in the whole country

Turnout in prefectural assembly elections is slightly lower than that of the national elections. The average turnout in the whole country in the latest three elections held simultaneously (1983, 1987, 1991) is 66.9%. (I prepared this report in this March. So It does not include the data of the recent unified local elections in April 1995. The turnout records the lowest since the Second World War, 56.2%)

4 The difference by region

A similar tendency can be observed as in the national elections (1)-2. The highest in the latest three elections simultaneously is 83.7% in SHIMANE. The lowest is 51.2% in CHIBA. The average turnout in these elections, the population density and the ratio of primary sector workers in the highest five prefectures are respectively 81.1%, 41.1% and 13.4%. Those of the lowest

five are respectively 54.0%, 74.0% and 4.0%. (However the turnout of the single seat constituencies seems to be affected by marginality.)

5 The competence of the municipal assembly

The directly elected mayor dominates. The influence of the assembly is small.

6 The system of municipal assembly elections

A large size multi-member constituency system operates. The designated cities (large cities) have wards. Other municipalities elect all their members 'at large' (in one constituency covering the whole municipal area respectively). Individual constituencies have more than 10 seats, roughly on average 20. The elector votes for only one candidate.

7 The turnout of the whole country

The number of the municipalities is more than 3000. The calculation has not yet been done. However one can estimate approximately the turnout is slightly higher than the prefectural assembly elections and as same as that of the national elections.

8 The difference by the area

A similar tendency can be observed as that of the national elections aforesaid (1)-2. For example, the turnouts of the towns and villages in SHIMANE is higher than 90%. They are higher than those of the national elections. On the other side those of the 23 KU of TOKYO is about 50%. They are lower than those of the national elections.

(3) The difference in the turnout between the national and the local elections

The difference is small. The turnout in national elections is

high in the areas where the turnout of the local elections is high, and turnout in national election is low in the areas where turnout in local election is low. Turnout is high in 'rural' areas and is low in the urbanized areas in all the levels of elections.

☆ The theme of this report

The difference in Britain between the national and local elections is approximately 35%. On the other hand that of Japan is negligible. The same kind of electoral systems are operating on both levels in the two countries. What causes this disparity in the differences? This question is the primary theme of this report.

III The arguments about the causes of the low turnout in the British local elections are as follows (The numerical order does not have any meaning.).

(1) Electoral System

- 1 The low turnout partly results from the 'winner takes all system'.
- 2 The partial renewal system causes low turnout, creating a dilution of the interest of the residents in the elections. This causes also so-called election fatigue.

(2) Local Government System

- 1 The central government has the decisive power, and the power of local governments is residual.
- 2 The two tier system causes the low turnout. The one area has twofold local governments (county and district). The power of each local government is diluted and the interest of the residents in local politics is dispersed.



- 3 The population size of local government causes low turnout especially on the district level. An individual district consists of too many residents, who cannot be a local community.
- (3) Local Councillors
    - 1 The equivalent role of local councillors is less than that of parliamentarians. In the policy making of the local government, the influence of senior civil servants is decisive. The local councillors may be likened to part-time amateur worker. In national politics the voice of Parliamentarians is quite important.
    - 2 The remuneration of local councillors is extremely small. Conditions for the activities of local councillors are quite inadequate. The calibre of the candidates and local councillors is low. Also many of them belong to the middle class, and few represent the lower classes (particularly unskilled workers).
  - (4) Political Parties
    - 1 Local politics has become completely politicized. Almost all local councillors are elected on the tickets of parties especially since the 1972 reform of the local government system.
    - 2 British political parties are mainly organized for national elections. They are highly centralized. Local party organizations as autonomous entities for local residents are powerless.
  - (5) Electioneering
    - 1 Canvassing in local elections organized by the political parties is less vigorous than in national elections.
  - (6) Media Coverage
    - 1 The media coverage of the local elections is far smaller than that of national elections. (Except for local newspapers.)

- (7) Residents (as a result of the causes from 1 to 6)
- 1 The decisive factors in voting behaviour in local elections are issues of national politics and the evaluation of national parties.
  - 2 Local residents are far less interested in local politics than in national politics.
  - 3 Local electioneering by organizations or individuals other than political parties is generally inactive.

#### IV Examination

##### (1) Electoral System

- 1 The single seat constituency system operates not only at the local but also at the national level. It is hardly persuasive that this system causes low turnouts in local elections. The election system does not seem to be fully explanatory of the difference in turnout between local and national elections.
- 2 turnout in Japanese prefectural assembly elections in districts containing one seat is not low.
- 3 There is not any substantial difference in turnout between an election for all seats simultaneously and partial renewal.
- 4 The election (or voters') fatigue is not necessarily explanatory. The number of elections over a certain period is not very many in Britain even in the partial renewal system. In Japan they hold at least six elections in four years. (Though, the French enjoy far more elections because of the two-ballot system, especially 1988-1989).

##### (2) Local Government System

- 1 The central government holds decisive power also in Japan (and in many countries). The power of British local govern-

ments does not seem to be less than that of their Japanese counterparts (or other countries').

- 2 Turnouts in years before the Thatcher government were also as low as in the 1980's and after. The competence of the then local governments were more powerful than in 1980's and after. The 'Quango State' does not seem to be explanatory.
- 3 The turnout in the districts where a one tier system is/was operating is/was as low as in the areas with two tier system.
- 4 A two tier system is operating also in Japan (and many countries, and in some other countries three tier system is operating).
- 5 Turnout in small towns and villages with small population (operating until the 1972 reform) was as low as those of the present districts. (However even those towns or villages were larger in population than the French communes.)
- 6 Turnout in Japanese cities at municipal elections with about the same populations as those of the British districts is high.
- 7 The lack, however, of a substantial mayor, holding dominant power like a French mayor, may partly contribute the low turnout. It makes so-called personification of local politics and elections difficult. The high turnout of the national elections seems to be caused partly by the personification of politics in the form of the prime minister which the elector can virtually choose. In this point British voting behaviour, in my view, is not necessarily party voting.

(3) Local Councillors

- 1 The competence and political influence of Japanese local councillors are far less than their British counterparts. In Japan

the power of the head of a local government is decisive and the senior local civil servants including the “descendants” from the central/or the prefectural government are more influential than their British counterparts. Japanese local councillors are also like part-time amateur workers. (In other countries which have directly (or substantially directly) elected mayors the local councillors are less powerful than the British counterparts.)

2 The remuneration of Japanese local councillors is higher than in Britain. However their electioneering is far more expensive. From the financial point of view it is said that their remuneration barely covers their canvassing. In the case of municipal councillors, except for large cities, they do not get any substantial political donations. (In many other countries the remunerations are also small.)

3 Japanese local councillors are rather more inactive and their calibre is low, particularly in small cities, towns and villages.

4 Also in Japan, many of them belong to the middle class. Few of them are representing the lower classes (particularly unskilled workers). (One can see the similar situations in other western countries.)

#### (4) Political Parties

1 Turnout was low in the years before the 1972 reform in Britain. In those years many of the candidates and councillors of towns and villages were independent, even so turnout in those areas was as low as at the present day.

2 According to the several surveys some electors are critical of the politicization of local politics. The voters seem to give more consideration to the factors of the candidates as individuals than

in the national elections. However as I mentioned above the politicization does not seem to explain the low turnout.

3 The local organizations of the Japanese parties are at least as weak as their British counterparts. The Japanese ones exist only nominally in the municipalities except for large cities.

4 British political parties are far more highly organized and centralized than Japanese parties. Nevertheless they seem to be not so powerful at local levels they can organize effective canvassing in the local election.

(5) Electioneering

1 The canvassing organized by the Japanese political parties in local elections is less vigorous than that of their British counterparts. The main forces in Japanese local elections are different 'organizations' from parties. In Britain other organizations are rather negligible.

(6) Media Coverage

1 The media coverage of local elections at municipal level in Japan is as small as its British counterpart. The major parts of the Japanese municipal elections are carried out not simultaneously but in isolation. Even the local media seldom take up the municipal councillors elections.

(7) Residents

1 In Japan the decisive factors of voting behaviour in the local elections tend to be local issues. Specifically the residents in 'rural' areas are interested in local issues themselves.

2 In Japanese local elections, especially in the 'rural' areas, the canvassing done by other organizations or individuals are more dominating than that done by the parties. Non-party

canvassing is more vigorous than the canvassing led by parties in British local elections.

(8) Concluding remarks

- 1 It seems that neither the electoral systems, the local government systems nor the local councillors cause the difference in turnout between the national elections and the local elections.
- 2 The weakness of the parties at local level, and/or the small coverage by the media may be explanatory. However as far as in comparison with Japan, it does not seem to be decisive. (To a greater or less degree, these phenomena can be seen in many other countries.)
- 3 In comparison with Japan, voting behaviour and participation in the canvassing of the local residents seems to be decisive. British electors do not seem to have much interest in local issues all around the country. They have seldom participated enthusiastically in the local election canvassing. They vote in local elections primarily on the basis of their view of national politics, specifically government achievements. They choose one of the national parties (including Scottish and Welsh Nationalists). On the other side the parties canvass is less vigorous. The media's coverage is far smaller than in national elections. It seems that British electors do not go to the polls without a vigorous party-campaign and media coverage. This is what seems to cause the low turnout at local elections.

V The causes of the high turnout of the Japanese elections in the 'rural' area. (These areas come under the six conditions above mentioned in IV-(1).)

(1) A case study in Shimane prefecture (the prefecture unit: highest turnout)

1 Turnout in the latest elections: those of the largest five cities (average number of electors: 42,431) and those of the smallest five towns or villages excluding the islands (average number of electors: 1,819)

1 lower house	the largest 5:	79.4%	the smallest 5:	90.2%
2 upper house		70.4%		86.9%
3 prefectural assembly		81.2%	(3 non-contested)	89.3%
4 the governor (3 & 4 at the same day)				
		81.3%		86.7%
5 municipal assembly		83.8%		95.1%
6 the heads (1 non-contested)		77.4%	(1 non-contested)	95.5%

2 Analysis from the demographic point of view

Age: Shimane is the most aging prefecture. The turnouts of the middle aged and elderly electors are higher than the younger people.

Long term residency: The average term of residency in Shimane is longer than in many other prefectures. The turnout of the long term residents are higher than of short term residents.

Population size of municipalities: The size of the municipalities of Shimane is smaller than in many other prefectures. The turnout in smaller municipalities is higher than that of the larger cities.

Primary industry: The number of people who work in primary sector (full-time or part-time) and their families in Shimane is larger than in many other prefectures. The turnout of the people in this category is higher than that of people in other categories.

3 Analysis from the viewpoint of social networks

One can expect densely extended social networks in the areas where these three conditions are satisfied. A centre-periphery relation or a quasi patron-client relation: Such social connections can be seen prominently in Shimane. For example, as a traditional form, the former landlord and his tenants, the dominant family and their relatives, or more recently, KEIRETSU among the companies, typically in the construction and civil engineering industries, business connections among the individual trades.

In actual fact, the relationship between the central prefectural and municipal governments can be categorised in this way. The relationship between the local governments (the heads, the senior officers and the powerful councillors) and residents is also in this type. Vertical social connections extend through blood, neighbourhood, freindship and business ties.

4 Analysis in relation to elections

People located in the centre, often as quasi-patrons, are middle aged or elderly who have lived there for many years (often generation after generation). Many of the spontaneous and enthusiastic participants in elections are these people. Canvassing seems to be carried out on the basis of these social networks. These densely extended social networks seem to increase turnout.



These active participants have a keen interest in local interests and issues. Their participation in the elections seems to be urged not by their ideology or feeling of identity to the national parties but by these local interests, issues and feeling of identity to these social networks.

5 Non-political or non-ideological elections

The major aspects of electioneering are motivated neither by the loyalty to the parties nor by ideology. (The exception is the canvassing managed by the Communists or the radical left wing of the Socialists.) This non-political and non-ideological electioneering seems to cause the high turnout.

6 Politicians as the representatives of their areas or groups

The majority of councillors and heads of the municipalities are independent. Many prefectural councillors (and some large city councillors) are elected on the ticket of a party. Nevertheless they are expected to act as representatives of all their constituents (or their local bases: the areas where many electors support them). The heads who are elected on the ticket(s) of party(ies) are also expected to act in order to realize the interests of their whole area. Parliamentarians, though they are all party politicians, are rather, in actual fact, a sort of lobbyists for all the constituents, their support bases or their support organizations. This non-partisan stance of the politicians seems to cause the high turnout.

(2) A case study in MIHONOSEKI-CHO (a small town in Shimane)

The population was 10,689 in 1955 and 8,208 in 1985. A small depopulated town. The share of the primary sector among the working population is 76.1% in 1955 and 25.0% in 1985.

1 The residents' organizations of the town

A kind of two-tier system (partly three tier system ) is operating in the town. Mihonoseki-cho has 26 KU. A KU is not an electoral district but an administrative district and at the same time an autonomous resident association. KU has 78 households on average. (One household has four members on average.) The head of the individual KU is elected by all the members of assembly of the individual KU. In actual fact he(very rarely she) is selected in advance through negotiation among the heads of the lower tiers. A total of 106 KUMI are operating as a second tier. The large KUMI has the third tier called HAN. The KUMI or HAN as the lowest tier has 10 households on average. The headship of the individual KUMI or HAN turns to every household in a rotation and is taken by head of each individual household. The basic unit is not an individual but a household. Though it takes a voluntary form, the membership is on a rather compulsory basis.

2 The relation between the residents' organizations and the town government

The residents' organizations are operating as a sub-system of the town government. The flow of output and input are going down and up in the line of Town government - KU - KUMI (-HAN).

3 The councillors' elections in this town

1991 town councillors election:

The number of candidates was 21 in 1983, 19 in 1987 and 17 in 1991.

The number elected was 20 in 1983, 18 in 1987 and 16 in 1991.

All the candidates are independent except for one Communist.

The number of electors was 6,143 and turnout 93.1% in 1991. The mayor's election did not take place, because they had only one candidate who was the incumbent. Non-contested elections are more frequent than contested ones in these town mayoral elections. The elections for the head of town and village all around Japan, are often non-contested.

4 The selection of the candidates

The selection takes place within the individual group consisting of the neighbourhood-ties (cross several KUs) and blood-ties. Negotiations within the group (one set of social network) and among groups is decisive. (In a sense it is a kind of primary election behind the scene.) The number of candidates ends up with the number of seats plus one or two. All the candidates other than the Communist are independent and representing their own groups (often based on a particular area). This kind of phenomena can be seen in the 'rural' areas of Japan at large.

5 Electioneering

The organization consists of the brains, canvassing managers (DAIKAN) and canvassers (SHOKAN). This is primarily based on the blood-ties. The canvassing to the residents takes place on the basis of the neighbourhood-ties, friendship-ties, job-ties and other ties. (It seems that the leading role of the blood-ties can be seen mainly in the village and small towns. On the other side neighbourhood-ties seem to be dominant mainly in the comparatively large towns and small cities.)

6 Voting

It seems that the electors go to the polls to give respect to their personal connection with them or to confirm the identity

to a group (social network). Their voting is basically neither party-voting nor ideological. It is not policy-oriented voting. There can be seen little difference in policy among independent candidates except for narrow regional interests.

7 Activities of the councillors

As mentioned above the important policy makers are the town mayor and the senior civil servants. The primary mediators are the heads of KU. The role of the town councillors is auxiliary or ceremonial. Their activities are mainly to associate with the residents.

8 Electioneering and turnout in other elections.

The same kind of groups (the identical or other set of social networks) can be observed as primary election machine at the prefectural and the national level (including the upper house).

The turnout in this town is always high in any election.

The turnout in the 1993 national election was 87.8%.

That of the 1991 prefectural councillors election was 88.0%.

The highest is 94.2% in the town councillors elections. (The town mayor election was not contested.)

(3) The causes of the low turnout in the urbanized areas

1 As a general rule, the larger the size of the municipalities, the weaker the connections among the candidates and canvassers and electors, and the lower the turnout.

Social networks are sparsely extended in the urbanized areas. Younger electors are far more than in 'rural' areas. The mobility of the people are far higher. Far fewer long term residents in generation after generation. The blood-ties or the neighbourhood-ties are far weaker. Business ties are also weaker. These unsta-

- ble and large-meshed networks do not seem to increase turnout.
- 2 The social networks, however, of the SOKA-GAKKAI and the Communist party seem to contribute to the turnout. The KOMEI Party and the Communist Party are comparatively powerful in the urban areas. If their social networks are not running, the turnout in urbanized areas seems to go down further. The KOMEI Party based on the SOKA-GAKKAI is a religious organization. It was originally growing rapidly as a quasi-rural community for the newcomers who migrated into the metropolitan areas during the decade of high economic growth. Although the Communist Party is the most ideological (or rather the sole ideological) party in Japan, it also considers that association among the party members and the supporters is very important to win the elections.
  - 3 The party-voting, ideological voting or policy-oriented voting in the urbanized areas seems to be as less influential as in the 'rural' areas. At least it is clearly not so influential to make up for a scarcity of the social networks and to increase the turnout.
  - 4 Media coverage seems to increase a little and to raise the turnout always slightly, though sometimes considerably. The electors in the urbanized areas seem to be affected more than those in 'rural' areas. The media sometimes covers zealously the local elections in the metropolitan areas.
  - 5 It seems that turnout in Japan is dependent primarily on the degree of density (or scarcity) of social networks participating into the elections. Turnout in the areas where the densely extended social networks are working in the elections is high.

That in areas where few such networks operate is low.

- 6 Japanese voting seems to be different from the model that the individual voters cast their votes independently or in isolation on the basis of party ideology or policy preferences. (Japanese voters also often take policies into account. However they seem to do mainly some particular ones that will directly affect to their social networks (their areas, trades, companies, etc.)

## VI Comparison between Britain and Japan: hypothetical reflections rather than an conclusion

### (1) Cleavage

#### 1 Divided society

It is said that British society is divided. However Japanese society is also divided not only in the urbanized areas but in the 'rural' areas. Possibly Britain after the Thatcher government is more divided than Japan. Nevertheless it may be questionable, especially in the age before Thatcher.

My view is that the difference in social cleavage results from rather psychological aspects. British society seems to be psychologically divided, whereas Japanese society seems to be not so divided (Everything is a matter of comparison.) Many Japanese share a common lifestyle and so-called 'middlestrata' consciousness. Differences in accent primarily depend not on social classes but on the areas where people live.

It is not objective cleavages but psychological ones (or the cleavages in consciousness) that affects elections. For example one does not see a significant correlation between party support and the income of the voters in Japan.

2 Social network

From the point of view of social networks it seems that British social networks do not extend across the social strata, Whereas Japanese ones do. Networks do not seem to extend across the cleavage between 'Us' and 'them' in British society. In contrast all members of local areas, companies and other groups in Japanese society are simply 'We' with exception of a few minorities. (Although differences in the shape of social networks can be proven theoretically, full-scale research on them is difficult in practice.)

3 Political cleavages

Political cleavages in Britain are clear. They are symbolized in a word 'adversary politics'. (My view is that the consensus politics was a by-product of the Second World War and was an exceptional phenomenon in the twentieth century. Even in consensus politics the Tories and Labour did not seem to be so intimate as the conservatives and 'socialists' in Japan. On the other hand political cleavages in Japan are rather cosmetic. (The period of approximately fifteen years after the Second World War was an exceptional age of the polarised politics.) The sole real cleavage exists between the communists and other parties. (The KOMEI Party is making its best efforts to be an insider in the political world. On the other hand, perhaps for this reason, a social cleavage can be seen between SOKA-GAKKAI and other people.) Therefore any set of coalitions among the parties is possible.

4 In Japanese local elections the independent candidates, who are conservative and progressive simultaneously rather than

neither LDP nor JSP, collect many votes on the basis of the networks covering almost the whole of the local society. In the national elections the LDP (conservatives), the Democratic Socialist and the Socialist candidates have been often competing within the same social networks (or in other words, sharing them). For example networks of trade union members are at the same time networks within and among the companies or local governments concerned.

- 5 In British local elections one can hardly imagine an independent candidate obtaining support from the whole of local society. Political and social cleavages make it highly unlikely.

What I stated, however, above does not offer proof that two or more social networks developing intensely do not coexist within sections of society. Nevertheless it is obvious that these networks are not working in local elections, if they exist, as shown by the low turnout.

- 7 A concluding remark on this subject

It cannot be said that British social and political cleavages without networks across social strata inevitably cause differences in turnout between national and local elections. This must be analyzed in other ways.

It can be said that Japanese society and the political world on the basis of the networks crossing social strata (without cleavages) are highly likely cause the negligible difference in turnout between local and national elections. However we should observe the political factors involved.

- (2) Local politics for the parties and electors in Britain and Japan

1 British political parties are highly centralized, at least far



more centralized than Japanese parties (except for JCP and KOMEI Party). Furthermore local politics (local government and elections) are not regarded as being so important as national politics or government. The parties are concentrating their efforts primarily on winning political power at the national level. Under the labour government, which built up the welfare state, the centralization was developed. Since the Thatcher government took office, this is even more vigorously being developed by the Tories. As a general rule British voting behaviour is political. Voters vote for a party. They seem to cast their ballots to choose a party governing the nation. Both of the parties and electors seem to think little of local elections. This lack of concern seems to cause the low turnout.

2 Japanese political parties (except for JCP and KOMEI) are rather a coalition of local 'notables' (or rather the 'notorious'). The power bases of those politicians exist not on the basis of posts of their party organizations, but in their own local bases. (Whereas those of British politicians exist on the basis of membership in their party organizations.) In Japanese elections the candidates standing as independents often seem to be promising more than if they had run on the ticket of any party. However they have to accept party labels in order to obtain party or ministerial posts in national politics. Local elections are the primary concerns not only for local but also for national politicians. Local elections are often rather more important for them than national politics itself.

In rural areas their local bases are stable and powerful on the basis of dense and extensive social networks. The turnout

is high not only in local but also in national elections. On the other hand in urbanized areas their local bases are fragile and based on fewer and less widely spread networks. So turnout is always low. In rural areas the electors have as much interest in local elections as in national ones. In the urbanized areas they do not feel much interest either kind of elections.

(3) Socio-economic or historical background

- 1 The differences in local politics between Britain and Japan should be explained by other factors.

I do not have the necessary data about the mobility of the residents (how long have they lived there). The Japanese national census provides this data, but the British census does not.

At a rough estimate, however, I think that the mobility of the residents is/has been bigger in Britain than in Japanese 'rural' areas.

- 2 In Japanese 'rural' areas long term residents are located in the centre of the social networks, as mentioned above. Even in the periphery the mobility of residents is not very great. So many residents feel interest in local issues and identity with their local areas. Politicians build up stable local power bases.

On the other hand in urbanized areas the mobility is great. (Possibly as great as in Britain) So many residents do not feel interest in local issues or identity with their local areas. One can see only fragile local bases.

- 3 In the case of Britain already in 1910 about 50% lived in urban areas (in the municipalities with 20,000 people or more). Around the same time the working population in the primary sector was dwindling to less than 10%.

In the case of Japan only 50 years ago (directly after the Second World War) about two thirds of the population lived in towns or villages and even in 1960 approximately 40% did. Full time farmers were 50% of the working population after the War and 25% in 1960.

The mobility of residents in many areas of Britain may be as great as in the Japanese urbanized areas. On this assumption it is not difficult to explain the neglect of local politics in Britain. The mobile residents are highly unlikely to feel an interest in local issues and identity with these areas. If they think politics is important, politics must mean national politics. It is difficult and unproductive for the parties to make efforts to found powerful local organizations.

A concluding but hypothetical comment

- 1 In Japan: Turnout depends primarily on the density of social networks operating in the elections concerned. These networks extend across objective social strata. In other words one can not see clear full-scale social cleavages. Those networks cause the political world to lack substantial cleavages. The 'political parties' are just 'a party' or 'a crowd' of individual politicians who are running their own local power bases. These power bases operate on the basis of 'non-political' social networks. Many voters cast their ballots in accordance with their interests and their feeling in their social networks. (Their voting, however, may be unstable if they belong equally to two or more networks in which case this reinforces the pressure for them to go to the polling stations, especially in the rural areas.) So

turnout depends primarily on the density of the social networks operating in the elections concerned. In the rural areas networks are dense and extensive. In the urbanized areas they are weak and non-extensive. So in the former areas turnout is always high. In the latter areas turnout is always low. So the difference in turnout between national and local elections is little.

- 2 In Britain one can observe clear social and political cleavages. The political parties are organized and operate fundamentally on the basis of sections of society. The power of politicians is dependent on their posts in their parties. Voters cast their ballots in accordance with their party preference. Turnout seems to dependent on rather marginality (the competition among the parties). Both parties and voters consider local politics is not to be so important as national politics. The electors seem to be affected by media coverage. So turnout in the local elections is always lower than in national elections in all regions. This way of thinking about the local politics may be caused by the high mobility of electors and the political character of deeply industrialized cities almost all around Britain.

Thank you for your listening.

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