Party Competition, Nomination Errors, and the Electoral Decline of the Japan Socialist Party

Dennis Patterson and Joseph Robbins

Abstract

Social democratic parties have thrived in most democracies, but the Japan Socialist Party (JSP) has declined to such an extent that it has become almost electorally irrelevant. Explanations for this involve such factors as the party’s ideological rigidity and poor leadership, which have kept it from responding effectively to the increased electoral competition it has faced. While such explanations are generally accurate, this essay shows that there is more to the story of the JSP’s electoral decline, by investigating the socialists’ decline in Japan at the election district level from 1958 through 1993. This is where the JSP’s endorsed candidates won and lost district seats; our investigation shows that, during this period, the JSP faced increased electoral competition on its left and right flanks, which hurt it electorally in both direct and indirect ways. It hurt the JSP directly by inhibiting the ability of the party’s candidates to win legislative seats in district elections, and indirectly by leading the party to commit too many nomination errors, which, in turn, led to the loss of district seats that it otherwise would have obtained. Overall, the study’s results suggest that, while the JSP could not have stopped its electoral decline completely, it could have preserved more of its support if it had been able to bridge its internal ideological gaps to keep itself from fragmenting.

Key words: Japan, elections, Japan Socialist Party, Social Democratic Party of Japan, electoral rules, nomination errors, electoral competition, electoral markets, party strategy.

While social democratic parties have thrived in most advanced industrial nations, Japan’s principal socialist party has declined to such an extent that it

Dennis Patterson is Associate Professor and Chairman of the Department of Political Science, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas. <dennis.patterson@ttu.edu>
Joseph Robbins is Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science, Shepherd University, Shepherdstown, West Virginia. <jrobbins@shepherd.edu>
has become almost electorally irrelevant.¹ Consider the data in table 1, which provide a mapping of the Japan Socialist Party’s (JSP’s) postwar electoral trajectory.

In the early postwar elections, Japan’s socialists were divided into left and right parties, and, as the data indicate, these two parties experienced significant electoral gains.² Japan’s left and right socialists reunited in 1955, and the Japan Socialist Party grew to become Japan’s largest opposition party, obtaining nearly one-third of the vote and just over one-third of the available seats in the lower house of Japan’s National Diet, the House of Representatives. Although it remained Japan’s largest opposition party throughout the next four decades, the JSP experienced an oscillating decline that appears to be permanent. In the thirteen lower-house elections held from 1958 through 1993, the party’s vote and seat shares were more than halved, and, in the five elections that have

Table 1. The Electoral Fortunes of the JSP, 1947-1993

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Votes</th>
<th>Seats</th>
<th>+ / -</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-System</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>19.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>19.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 System</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>35.5</td>
<td>+2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>+3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>+1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>+0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>-2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>+2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>+3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>+1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>+1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>+2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>-0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>+2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>-1.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ The reference here is to the Japan Socialist Party (JSP). For most of the postwar period, this party was known as the Japan Socialist Party (JSP), but, in 1991, it changed its official name to the Social Democratic Party of Japan (SDPJ). In the interest of consistency and because it was known by its former name for most of the period under consideration in this essay, the party is referenced as the JSP.

occurred under Japan’s new mixed election system, its vote and seat shares have been barely one-third of its 1993 totals.³

The near collapse of such an important political party is not a common occurrence in the world’s advanced electoral democracies.⁴ Consequently, why Japan’s principal socialist party has experienced this nearly lethal decline is a question of empirical and theoretical interest to both scholars in comparative politics, who study parties and elections in democratic political systems, and to Japan specialists, who continue to debate why this postwar politics followed the trajectory it did. Members of the latter group have produced a number of explanations for the decline of the JSP, which have focused on the party’s strategic inflexibility and the increasingly competitive electoral environment it faced as the postwar period progressed.⁵

Such explanations have accurately describe the electoral environment the JSP encountered as well as its response to that environment, and therefore have considered the factors that undoubtedly contributed to the party’s electoral decline. However, these explanations have not been subjected to an empirical test that calibrates their impact in all of the elections and election districts in which JSP candidates competed for Diet seats against other party-endorsed and unaffiliated candidates.⁶ If the increased electoral competition the JSP faced throughout the postwar period and its inability to respond to it in an effective manner are the reasons for the party’s decline, we should see evidence of this in Japan’s multiseat election districts, because this is where socialist candidates increasingly lost legislative seats that they previously had won.

The purpose of this essay is to provide an empirical investigation that connects both the increased electoral competition with which the JSP had to contend throughout the postwar period and the JSP’s strategic behavior to the increasingly poor performance of its candidates at the district level. The analysis will show that the JSP’s candidates were challenged by an increasingly

---

³ In the most recent election of 2009, the socialists were reduced to six seats in the lower house of the Diet, even though they were brought into the government as a member of the Democratic Party of Japan’s (DPJ’s) coalition.

⁴ Traditionally, all socialist parties have faced support limits, especially when they have continued to rely principally on union members and industrial workers for votes. See Adam Przeworski and John Sprague, _Paper Stones: A History of Electoral Socialism_ (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986). However, unlike the JSP, they have managed to broaden their support bases and remain competitive electoral parties.

⁵ This does not mean that comparativists, in general, ignored the JSP’s electoral decline. See, for example, Herbert Kitschelt, _The Transformation of European Social Democracy_ (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994). Kitschelt referred to the JSP as being its own worst enemy.

⁶ To be clear, there have been works that have used district-level data in virtually all election districts and elections, but these were designed to address questions other than why Japan’s JSP declined to the extent it did in Japanese district elections. It is also true that some scholars have looked at election results at the district level, but there is nonetheless no aggregate statistical analysis of outcomes for all election districts over all elections, up to and including the election of 1993, that tries to explain why the socialists in Japan declined to the extent they did.
competitive electoral environment as the postwar period progressed and that this hurt the party electorally in direct and indirect ways. Increased electoral competition hurt the party directly by reducing the JSP candidates’ ability to win district seats. The district-level analysis in this essay will confirm this, but also it will show that the increased competition contributed to the party’s decline indirectly by rendering the strategic problem it encountered more difficult.

The strategic problem involved being certain to endorse the appropriate number of candidates under Japan’s old multimember district system, in which voters cast a single nontransferable vote (SNTV). Under this system, if a party endorsed more or fewer candidates than its obtained vote shares would permit it to win, it lost seats that it otherwise would have obtained had it nominated differently. In light of this, we also show that the additional competition on the JSP’s left and right flanks hurt it electorally in an indirect manner by rendering it more difficult for the JSP to nominate the correct number of candidates in order to avoid seat losses due to nomination errors.

Together, these two impacts on the JSP’s ability to obtain district seats suggest that the party would necessarily experience some electoral decline. However, as we show below, the JSP could have preserved some of its support if it had been able to keep its right-wing factions from bolting from the party, as they did in 1960 and 1977. This would have reduced some of the electoral competition on the party’s right flank, which, in turn, would have allowed the party to hold on to some of the seats its candidates in fact lost. We begin this effort to show how increased electoral competition and its direct and indirect effects led to the JSP’s electoral decline by reviewing existing explanations for the JSP’s long-term, secular waning.

Assessing Explanations for the JSP’s Electoral Decline

The explanations that political scientists have offered for the decline of Japan’s main socialist party focus on the behavior this party followed throughout the postwar period and on the changing electoral competition it faced. Concerning the former, political parties in the world’s advanced democracies contended with changing electoral markets throughout the postwar period, forcing them to adapt or suffer inevitable decline. Most of these parties responded to change with alternative electoral strategies, and, as a result, they either increased their levels of electoral support or, at a minimum, staved off electoral backsliding, allowing them to remain significant players in their respective party systems. Like its counterparts in other advanced democracies, the JSP

---

7 See, for example, Peter Mair, Wolfgang Muller, and Fritz Plasser, *Political Parties and Political Change* (London: Sage Publications, 2004).
8 See, for example, ibid., and Kitschelt, *The Transformation of European Social Democracy*. 
confronted a changing electoral market, but, according to the literature, it was either unwilling or unable to devise an effective alternative electoral strategy, which led to its electoral descent.\(^9\)

There is no dispute in the literature that the JSP was inflexible, but whether the party’s inflexibility was due to unwillingness or inability has been the subject of debate. Scholars who argue that the party’s inflexibility was owed to unwillingness note that, to keep white-collar union members and other traditional supporters satisfied, JSP leaders remained committed to old, principally leftist, positions, which prevented any effective response to the changing electoral market.\(^10\) Scholars who emphasize the inability of the JSP to adjust argue that the sharp ideological division between the left and right wings of the party prevented leaders from forging a new electoral strategy that all members could support.\(^11\) Regardless of whether one emphasizes the JSP’s unwillingness or inability to adapt to changing electoral circumstances,\(^12\) there is no argument that electoral competition increased on the JSP’s left and right flanks. In spite of this, studies of the party’s electoral strategy lack explanation of exactly how the JSP’s inflexibility hurt it electorally, and what it could have done to prevent the deleterious effects this inflexibility caused.

The JSP was divided ideologically, leading to serious centrifugal tendencies. Ultimately, its right-wing elements bolted and formed new parties, which added to the JSP’s competition on its right flank. The right-flank competition was formidable enough, without the addition of these new parties. This was because the JSP’s principal challenge on the right was from the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), the erstwhile ruling party.\(^13\) The LDP

---


\(^10\) Some scholars note that it was certain developments within the JSP itself that contributed to the dominance of left-wing members. Specifically, uneven electoral success rates led to leftist-oriented candidates becoming numerically superior by the mid- to late-1950s. Moreover, that the Democratic Socialist Party (DSP) and the Social Democratic Federation (SDF) were formed by members of the party’s right wing also weakened moderate, right-wing elements in the JSP. See, for example, Masaru Kohno, “Electoral Origins of Japanese Socialists’ Stagnation,” *Comparative Political Studies* 30, no. 1(1997): 55-77.


\(^12\) For instance, Kitschelt titles his short description of the plight of the JSP as “the logic of self-destruction.” Kitschelt, *The Transformation of European Social Democracy*, 294.

\(^13\) The LDP was displaced from power for less than a year by a multiparty coalition after the election of 1993, but it suffered an overwhelming defeat at the hands of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) in the most recent election of 2009.
possessed many electoral advantages that were difficult, if not impossible, for the JSP to overcome, including the fact that the LDP was traditionally a much larger party, with strong roots in Japan’s rural areas. The LDP controlled the Japanese government for most of the postwar period, which allowed it to use the instruments of economic policy to serve its electoral interests.

Because the JSP could not bridge its ideological division, competition on its right increased when right socialist elements bolted and formed separate political parties. The most notable defections were first from former members who established the Democratic Socialist Party (DSP) in 1960, and, next, from other members who founded the Social Democratic Federation (SDF) in 1977. These defections led to direct losses of district seats for the JSP, an electoral problem which was exacerbated when additional competition appeared on the party’s right and left flanks. This occurred on the right when the Clean Government Party (CGP, or Komeito) began to endorse opposition candidates in the 1967 election, predominantly in urban districts. Trouble occurred on the left when voter support for the Japan Communist Party (JCP) increased, particularly in response to the environmental problems that plagued Japan throughout the 1960s and 1970s. The appearance of and growth in support for these new political parties impaired the JSP’s ability to compete directly for district seats, contributing to its electoral decline.

The increased electoral competition, caused partly by the JSP’s inability to bridge its ideological division, clearly hurt the JSP. Our purpose is to show how this increased competition led to the JSP’s deterioration, by mapping the electoral success and failure of its candidates in all elections held from 1958

---

14 The JSP received support in rural areas earlier in the postwar period, but this support declined as Japan’s urban areas expanded. Also, Watanuki explained that the LDP’s advantage and the intense battles between the two camps were the consequences of Japan’s early postwar “culture politics,” in which the LDP was the dominant party electorally. See Joji Watanuki, *Politics in Postwar Japanese Society* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1977).


16 Both of these parties were composed largely of members who bolted from the JSP.
through 1993. The literature on the JSP’s failing contains some discussion of Japan’s electoral system of multimember districts with SNTV, but discussions generally have been narrowly focused and directed to problems that do not address the specific question being investigated here. Rather, they have focused on which parties and blocs were advantaged by the country’s multimember district system, most concluding that the system was more beneficial to the LDP than to the JSP. The argument is that the LDP was better at avoiding nomination errors because it enjoyed advantages from being the governing party and, thus, at the center of power. Other scholars have acknowledged that the LDP held an advantage by being the governing party, but they do not agree that the LDP was superior at avoiding nomination errors.

Even when discussions of the Japanese electoral system have focused specifically on explaining the JSP’s electoral trajectory, they either have focused on the limits of this institutional explanation, or they have not analyzed all election districts across all elections. Scholars have argued in favor of the former limitation for theoretical reasons, such as Scheiner’s discussion of “opposition failure,” in which he dismisses the Japanese electoral system as inadequate to account for the JSP’s postwar decline. Scholars also have made the same argument for empirical reasons. In these arguments, they have assigned appropriate weight to Japan’s electoral institutions, but their analyses of institutional impacts have not covered all districts for all postwar elections. While limited in scope and breadth, this study shows that the electoral incentives inherent in the system not only increased the electoral pressure on the JSP in district elections, but also helped advance the JSP’s left wing, rendering it more difficult to keep the party’s factions on the right satisfied.

To determine the extent to which Japan’s electoral institutions may have played a role in the electoral decline of the JSP, requires an analysis of the party’s performance, as well as the performances of all of its competitors, in all election districts, in all postwar elections. This essay provides such an analysis, but to be certain that we have adequately calibrated the impact of the increased competition with which the JSP had to cope in the postwar period, we also consider the indirect effects of increased electoral competition on the

---


20 See Kohno, “Electoral Origins,” which uses data only from the 1976 election.
party. The reference here is to the idea that increased electoral competition hurt the JSP by impairing its ability to make error-free nominations. We also make this determination by calibrating the effect of increased electoral competition and the JSP’s strategic response to it in districts for all contests held from 1958 through 1993. This requires that we analyze the JSP’s—and the LDP’s—nomination decisions. We begin this effort by providing a review of the scholarly work on nomination errors under SNTV.

Evaluating Nomination Errors under SNTV

Japan’s old Multimember District (MMD)/SNTV electoral system was defined by geographically based districts in which magnitudes ranged, on average, from three to five seats. The political parties (PP) had to decide whether to endorse 0 ... K candidates (PPCs), given an expected total party vote that would be distributed across a number of endorsed candidates—\( V_1(PPC_1) \) ... \( V_K(PPC_K) \). In addition, parties had to consider that their endorsees would face 0 ... L opposing candidates (OCs), who would distribute their votes across a number of other parties’ and unaffiliated candidates—\( V_1(OC_1) \) ... \( V_L(OC_L) \).

Many scholars have written about this strategic decision problem, however, their writings are characterized by areas of agreement and disagreement. Scholars agree that parties committed nomination errors when they endorsed a number of candidates that was different from the number of district seats their vote shares would allow them to obtain, and, thus, lost a seat that they otherwise could have won. Scholars disagree over how to categorize nomination errors and whether actual nomination decisions were erroneous.

Scholarly differences over how to evaluate and categorize the nomination decisions of political parties under SNTV are significant to be sure, but they

\[21\] After the 1986 reforms, there were several two-seat districts and one six-seat district.


\[23\] For example, these two teams of scholars came to different conclusions about the extent to which parties commit over- and under-nominations.
are less important for analyzing the JSP’s nomination decisions than the fact that all scholarly work on nomination strategies under SNTV is alike in one crucial manner. Scholars working on this strategic problem have evaluated whether nomination decisions were erroneous by asking, had a party followed a different nomination strategy, would it have won an additional seat with its obtained vote share? This means determining whether a different number of endorsed candidates could have resulted in this party’s winning an additional seat under a theoretically optimal split of the vote. However, by evaluating nomination strategies in this way, scholars have assumed that the actual number of votes a party obtained would remain constant under the different nomination strategy. Consequently, even though a different number of candidates would be endorsed under the alternative strategy, evaluations have assumed that the party would have obtained the same number of votes it received under the original strategy.

The assumption is untenable for a number of reasons, but most important is the empirical fact that the number of votes a party obtained in a district election was positively related to the number of candidates it nominated. Consider the data from district elections in Japan contained in table 2. These data are averaged over the lower-house elections held from 1958 through 1993, and show a strong association between the number of candidates a party nominated and the total number of votes it received in district elections.24

As is well known, the LDP nominated the largest number of candidates in district elections held under SNTV in Japan; the data are clear that higher numbers of endorsed candidates were associated with larger numbers of obtained district votes. Second to the LDP was Japan’s largest opposition party, the JSP, which at one time nominated as many as four candidates in some district elections. As with the LDP, there was a positive association between the number of candidates the JSP endorsed and the number of district votes the party won. Finally, on rare occasions, both the DSP and the JCP followed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Candidates</th>
<th>Average LDP Votes</th>
<th>Average JSP Votes</th>
<th>Average JCP Votes</th>
<th>Average DSP Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>111,228</td>
<td>75,429</td>
<td>32,496</td>
<td>59,768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>170,798</td>
<td>123,042</td>
<td>108,418</td>
<td>64,881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>218,368</td>
<td>176,391</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>251,507</td>
<td>253,966</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>273,591</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>287,629</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>298,516</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>368,700</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

24 We use the word “association” here deliberately because we are referring strictly to an empirically identified covariance and not to a causal relationship.
two-candidate strategies, and, while more dramatic for the JCP, nominating an additional candidate was associated with each party’s obtaining a larger number of district votes.\footnote{It is no doubt true that Japan’s parties nominated more candidates when they anticipated they would increase their vote totals, which means the association between candidates and votes is nonrecursive. In spite of this, our only point here is merely to state the benign fact that, in Japanese district elections, more endorsed candidates generate more party votes, and fewer endorsed candidates result in fewer party votes.}

In light of the positive relationship between the number of party candidates and the number of district votes obtained, our task is to provide a method that will allow us to estimate how the JSP’s, and for that matter all parties’, votes would have changed under different nomination strategies. While parties took a number of factors into consideration when making nomination decisions, they all had to determine how many candidates to endorse in Japan’s district elections from 1947 through 1993. Thus, we can capture the change in the number of votes a party received in a district election, given a change in the number of candidates it nominated in its marginal vote function. This is based on the idea that the marginal vote is a function of the number of candidates (x) the ith party nominates in district election, t, \( MV(x_{it}) \).

The marginal vote will always be zero when no candidate is nominated, which means that the intercept of this function is always zero. Moreover, when a party switches from a zero-candidate to a one-candidate strategy, its marginal vote will increase, and, while additional candidates produce additional votes, the rate at which obtained votes increase reaches a maximum and begins to decline at some number of nominated candidates. This means that a party’s marginal vote function is parabolic in shape with an exponential decay of the following form:

\[
MV(x_{it}) = \beta_1 X_{it}^N - \beta_2 X_{it}^K \quad (1)
\]

where,
- \( MV_{it} \) is the marginal vote as a function of nominated candidates,
- \( X_{it} \) is the number of candidates endorsed by the ith party in election t,
- \( N \) is an exponent that is \( \geq 1 \) but will vary across political parties,
- \( K \) is an exponent whereby \( K > N \) but will vary across political parties,
- \( \beta_s \) are coefficients to be estimated for different district elections.

Estimating equation (1) for different parties in different district elections provides values for the coefficients \( \beta_1 \) and \( \beta_2 \), but we still do not know the values of \( N \) and \( K \) that maximize the model’s fit to the data. These values vary across political parties because obtained votes for a given number of nominated candidates rise and decline at different rates for different political
parties. Consequently, the values of the exponents N and K that maximize the fit of the model to the data must be determined empirically. When values for these coefficients and exponents are determined, equation (1) forms the derivative of the function we need to find to determine how much the total number of votes a party received under its original strategy is likely to change when it switches to an alternative strategy. This value is determined by taking the definite integral of equation (1) above, which is given as follows:

$$\int_{a}^{b} \beta_1 X_{it}^N - \beta_2 X_{it}^K \, dx$$  \hspace{1cm} (2)

In equation (2), b and a represent the values that differentiate the numbers of candidates endorsed under the original and alternative nomination strategies. Also, in standard practice, a represents the lower bound of the definite integral, while b represents its upper bound. In light of this, the general solution to this definite integral is as follows:

$$\left(1/(N + 1)\right)\beta_1 X_{it}^{N+1} - \left(1/(K + 1)\right)\beta_2 X_{it}^{K+1} \right|_{a}^{b}$$  \hspace{1cm} (3)

Using estimates of $\beta_1$ and $\beta_2$ for the JSP across district elections, the solution to this definite integral gives us an estimate of how many votes these parties are likely to gain or lose in a district election when they switch to an alternative nomination strategy. To show how this works, consider the data in table 3 from the 1969 election in Tokyo’s second district. This was a five-seat district in which the JSP nominated two candidates, but did not obtain a district seat, while the LDP nominated two candidates, both of whom obtained seats. The three remaining district seats were won by the DSP, the CGP, and the JCP, which nominated one candidate each. Finally, a minor party nominated a single candidate who did not win a district seat and placed last in the candidate ranking for this election.

To illustrate how the model discussed above allows us to evaluate the nomination strategy followed by the JSP in the 1969 district election, we must first show how an analysis of the LDP nomination, based on vote totals remaining constant across alternative nomination strategies, would proceed. The extant procedure asks if there is an alternative strategy the JSP could have

---

26 We are interested in how nomination errors affected the changing electoral fortunes of the JSP. Consequently, we estimated equation (1), using OLS for this party across different elections, and using the values of N and K that maximized the models’ sum of squares. This is discussed in more detail below.

27 Values of the coefficients B1 and B2 are presented in the appendix. It should be noted that these coefficients are estimated for each election because they must be sensitive to how conditions related to voters and their participation rates, which changed from election to election. Consequently, because the elections under investigation here are treated as independent events, the model is useful for estimating vote changes associated with alternative strategies within single elections, but not for predicting such changes across pairs of elections.
employed that would have resulted in its winning one district seat. The obvious alternative was one in which the JSP would have switched from a two- to a one-candidate strategy, and both groups of scholars would then ask if the 86,725 votes the JSP received in this district election would have been sufficient to defeat the weakest winning candidate in that election. This happened to be the candidate nominated by the DSP, which obtained 60,931 votes. Since the total vote obtained by the JSP in the 1969 district election exceeded this number, its original strategy would have been labeled an over-nomination.  

A constant vote assumption maintains that the JSP would still have obtained all of its 86,725 votes in an alternative one-candidate nomination strategy. This is not tenable, however, because some portion of the 34,933 votes obtained by candidate JSP2 would not have been redistributed to the single nominated JSP candidate, if this candidate (JSP2) had not run. A portion of those votes would have been lost because some electors who voted for JSP2 would not have turned out, while others might have cast their ballots for another party’s or an unaffiliated candidate. Most importantly, if the vote loss the JSP would have incurred by switching to the alternative strategy had exceeded 25,794 votes, a single nominated candidate could not have defeated the weakest winning candidate (CGP1), and in this case, the JSP’s nomination in this district election would have been categorized as error-free.

In light of this, the task we face here involves using the model provided

---

Table 3. Election Results in Tokyo 2, 1969 (DM=5)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Candidate Vote</th>
<th>Party Vote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LDP1*</td>
<td>81,827</td>
<td>152,333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LDP2*</td>
<td>70,506</td>
<td>152,333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JSP1</td>
<td>51,792</td>
<td>87,725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JSP2</td>
<td>34,933</td>
<td>87,725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DSP1*</td>
<td>60,931</td>
<td>60,931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CGP1*</td>
<td>90,674</td>
<td>90,674</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCP1*</td>
<td>71,357</td>
<td>71,357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>11,335</td>
<td>11,335</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


* Indicates a candidate who won a seat.

---

The total JSP vote of 86,725 far exceeded the vote obtained by the single CGP candidate (60,931).
above to estimate the number of votes the JSP would have lost under the alternative strategy previously discussed. Given that JSP2 received 34,933 votes, we assume that the party would have lost some percentage of this number if it had switched to an alternative strategy that dropped this candidate. To make this determination, we need to solve equation (3) above where, for the number of candidates nominated under the original and alternative strategies, \( b = 2 \) and \( a = 1 \), and then plug in estimated values of \( \beta_1 \) and \( \beta_2 \) and \( N \) and \( K \) from the appendix. The equation to be solved is as follows:

\[
\int_{1}^{2} \beta_1 X^2 - \beta_2 X^6 \, dx = (1/3) \beta_1 X^3 - (1/7) \beta_2 X^7 \bigg|_{1}^{2} \tag{4}
\]

From the appendix, we see that the value of \( \beta_1 \) in 1969 equaled 30,880, and the value of \( \beta_2 \) was -150.89. We also see that the values of the exponents, \( N = 2 \) and \( K = 6 \), provided the best fit for the model. Using these values and solving equation (4), we determine that the JSP would have lost 69,315 votes. This number of votes is obviously much larger than the number contributed by JSP2 (34,933) to the party’s district vote total.\(^{29}\) The reason for this is that, because the number of nominated candidates is measured in discrete integers, 1...\( k \), and each integer represents a single unit change of equal value among all pairs of units, the model assumes that the contribution of each candidate to the party’s overall vote total was equal.

The problem is illustrated in figure 1, where the upper portion of the figure shows the situation where one candidate was the same in terms of vote contribution as another. This is the manner in which the model provided assesses the relationship between candidates and votes, which is why the calculated vote loss due to moving from a two- to a one-candidate strategy would have been 69,315. Contrary to this, we know that nominated candidates did not contribute equally to a party’s vote total in a district election; this situation is illustrated in the lower portion of figure 1.

Considering the data in table 3, we see that the two JSP candidates contributed different numbers to the party’s district vote total. This means that, to determine how many votes the JSP was likely to lose by switching from a two- to a one-candidate nomination strategy by dropping JSP2, we must weight the calculated vote loss by the share of total district vote obtained by that candidate. That share was 40.2 percent, and weighting the calculated vote loss by this percentage gives us an estimated vote loss of 27,865 votes.

Since we now know how many votes the JSP was likely to lose under an alternative one-candidate strategy, we can more accurately assess whether the

\(^{29}\) We reasoned that this over-estimation might have been due to the fact that our coefficient estimates were the average of all election districts in a year. To compensate for this, we broke our election years down by district sizes and estimated our coefficients again, but this did not alter our results; that is, it did not change our evaluation concerning in which districts the JSP (or other parties) committed nomination errors and in which districts nominations were error-free.
original nomination was optimal. Under the one-seat alternative nomination strategy, the best a single JSP candidate could have done was 58,860 votes, or 86,725 votes minus the 27,865 votes lost by dropping JSP2. This is not enough votes for the JSP to have won a district seat because the number of votes received by DSP1 (60,931) exceeded this number. This means that the original strategy should be labeled an error-free nomination, because even though the JSP nominated more candidates than it could win, it was still unable to defeat the weakest winning candidate in the 1969 district election and obtain an additional district seat.  

We realized that our estimated vote loss under the alternative nomination strategy is bounded by a confidence interval within which it was possible for a single JSP candidate to win a seat. Consequently, we coded this case and others like it as both erroneous and error-free. This small number of differences did not affect the results we report below.

---

30 We realized that our estimated vote loss under the alternative nomination strategy is bounded by a confidence interval within which it was possible for a single JSP candidate to win a seat. Consequently, we coded this case and others like it as both erroneous and error-free. This small number of differences did not affect the results we report below.
A Statistical Analysis of the JSP’s Electoral Performance, 1958-1993

With the problem of how to assess and categorize nomination decisions under SNTV addressed, we now can identify the factors that directly and indirectly affected the JSP’s ability to win seats in district elections, and determine what impact nomination errors had on the party’s ability to grapple with the increased competition it faced on its left and right flanks. We investigate this impact for the lower-house elections that occurred from 1958 through 1993, and begin with a discussion of the dependent and independent variables, turning next to the statistical concerns involved in estimating the models we develop below.31

Dependent Variable

Our purpose is to evaluate how the performance of the JSP’s candidates changed as they faced increased competition on their left and right flanks. To be sure, the JSP’s district-level electoral performance can be measured in different ways, and, in the analysis that follows, we chose two separate measures that capture different aspects of the JSP’s performance in district elections in which its candidates competed. The first measure concerns the efficiency of the JSP’s electoral performance, that is, how well the party used the electoral support it received in district elections for the purpose of acquiring lower-house seats. This performance efficiency is best captured in what are known as seat bonuses, which tell us how well the JSP translated the votes it received into district seats.32 For the period under consideration, the JSP’s seat bonuses averaged +1.13, but exhibited a substantial range from a minimum of -35.12 to a maximum of +32.75.33

Another aspect of the JSP’s electoral performance involved effectiveness, or how well the JSP’s district-level strategic efforts led to its candidates’ winning district seats. This is a more direct measure of the JSP’s performance in that it is focused squarely on whether that party was a dominant or minor player in the district elections in which its candidates competed. This aspect

31 Data for the statistical analysis performed in this section of the essay are available upon request from the authors.
32 Seat bonuses are calculated by subtracting a party’s vote share in a district election from the share of district seats captured in that same election. Positive remainders indicate higher seat shares, while negative remainders indicate the opposite. Moreover, this is the same metric employed by Cox and Niou, in their analysis of nomination errors under SNTV. See Cox and Niou, “Seat Bonuses under the Single Nontransferable Vote.”
33 The JSP’s seat bonus average was highest in Japan’s three-seat districts and declined slightly as district magnitudes proceeded to four- and five-seat districts. Moreover, while the JSP’s seat bonuses experienced a significant decline throughout the period under investigation, they did not reveal a temporal pattern when aggregated over all district magnitudes. Also, while there appeared to be a small relationship between district magnitude and JSP seat bonuses, this relationship was not statistically significant.
of party performance is best captured in the share or number of district seats the JSP obtained in the election districts in which its candidates contended, which means that effectiveness can be calculated either as the raw number of seats or the share of available seats captured by its candidates. In the analysis that follows, we calibrate the JSP’s election district strength (performance effectiveness) as the percentage of available district seats it won in a district election.

For the period under consideration, the percentage of seats obtained by the JSP in district elections varied with the magnitude of the district. In the nation’s three-seat districts, the JSP averaged 33.33 percent of the available seats, and this average ranged from no seats in some districts to two-thirds of available seats in others. In Japan’s four-seat districts, the JSP averaged 28 percent of available seats, and this average varied from a low of zero seats in some districts to a high of 75 percent of the seats in others. Finally, in Japan’s five-seat districts, the JSP averaged 27 percent of available seats, and this average varied from a low of zero seats in some districts to a high of 60 percent of the seats in others.

**Independent Variables**

Reflecting the literature discussed above, variables used to explain the efficiency and effectiveness of the JSP’s electoral performance in district elections can be divided into two categories. The first category concerns the growing electoral competition on the party’s left and right flanks in district elections from 1958 through 1993. Most important is the competition from the party’s principal competitor, the Liberal Democratic Party. We measured competition from the LDP as the share of the vote its candidates captured in district elections. Throughout the period under consideration, this share averaged 54.28 percent. Moreover, this average was over 60 percent in the 1958 election, and declined monotonically up to the 1976 election. In elections from 1979 through 1990, the LDP’s district vote shares averaged just over 50 percent, but, in the 1993 election, this average dropped over ten percentage points to 42.66 percent.34

As stated above, in addition to competition from the LDP, the JSP was challenged by increasing electoral pressure on its left and right flanks from other opposition parties. The competition on its left flank came from the Japan Communist Party, captured in the analysis by including the JCP’s district vote shares. The JCP’s vote shares were just over 2 percent in the 1958 election, but this average increased dramatically over the next several elections. Although the JCP’s vote shares reached 10.22 percent in the 1979 election, they dropped slightly over the remaining five elections, averaging 8 percent in these contests.

---

34 These averages were obtained by aggregating the party’s district vote shares over all election districts.
Competition on the JSP’s right flank came from several political parties, most notably the Democratic Socialist Party, the Clean Government Party, the Social Democratic Federation, and, in a small number of elections and districts, the Progressive Party. To capture this right-flank electoral competition, we summed the vote shares of these four political parties. This sum was zero in the 1958 election because the DSP was not formed until 1960, but it averaged 7 percent when the DSP was the only other non-JCP opposition party competing in district elections. This variable’s values increased dramatically over the next several elections with the addition of the CGP and SDF, averaging nearly 14 percent. In the 1993 election, several new opposition parties endorsed candidates in Japanese district elections, and, as a result, this value increased dramatically to just over 30 percent.

The second category of explanatory variable we include in our analysis refers to factors that were more under the JSP’s— and other parties’— control, specifically, the electoral strategies they employed under Japan’s MMD/SNTV electoral system. This category involves two sets of factors, the first of which concerns the fact that, as the postwar period progressed, more opposition parties endorsed more candidates, causing the total opposition vote to become fragmented. This fragmentation increased the potential for opposition party candidates to “go down together” and lose seats that they otherwise might have won. Opposition party leaders recognized this problem, and, beginning in 1972, non-JCP leaders forged cooperation agreements in over two hundred district elections.

The cooperation agreements involved one or more parties giving up candidate endorsements and agreeing to support candidates of other opposition parties. The JSP participated in some of these agreements, but more often than not such agreements did not include Japan’s main socialist party.

35 These included the elections of 1960 and 1963.
36 We should point out that political competition that is measured, as discussed, provides a reasonably good proxy for such factors that have measured in the aggregate in the literature as the JSP’s commitment to outdated, leftist policy positions. This is because other opposition parties on the JSP’s right flank had an incentive to enter because their chance of doing well increased in districts where leftist JSP candidates dominated. On the JSP’s left flank, JCP candidates were more likely to do better in districts with candidates who had abandoned leftist positions.
37 We also include vote shares from unaffiliated candidates which varied significantly from election to election, but averaged only one percent of the vote throughout the period under consideration.
38 This is called tomodaore (going down together) in Japanese. Baerwald showed that tomodaore took a greater toll on candidates from opposition parties than on candidates endorsed by the LDP. See Hans Baerwald, Party Politics in Japan (Boston, MA: Allen and Unwin, 1986).
Consequently, to estimate the influence that these agreements had on the JSP’s postwar electoral trajectory, we included both types of agreements in the analysis below as dummy variables. Specifically, for the first dummy, we coded the district elections in which opposition cooperation agreements did not include the JSP as 1 and all others as 0; second, we coded district elections in which the JSP was party to a cooperation agreement as 1, and all others as 0.  

The next set of factors concerns how well the JSP and LDP nominated in Japan’s district elections and what effect nomination errors had on the ability of the JSP to be an efficient and effective performer in district elections. Both the JSP and LDP committed over-nominations in district elections, but did so at quite different rates. The LDP committed an average of twenty-five over-nominations per election in the lower-house contests held from 1958 through 1993, while the JSP over-nominated much less frequently, committing an average of just over ten per election.

Our expectation is that both the efficiency and effectiveness of the JSP’s district-level electoral performance was hurt when it committed an over-nomination, but it is also our expectation that the JSP benefited electorally when the LDP committed an over-nomination. To capture these nomination errors in the model, we created dummy variables for when either the LDP or the JSP committed an over-nomination.

Models for Estimation
Again, given that we are interested in determining the extent to which the efficiency and effectiveness of the JSP’s performance in postwar district elections was influenced by electoral competition on its left and right flanks and nomination errors committed by itself and the LDP, the models that we estimate below take on the following form:

---

40 We realize that there were a number of cooperation agreements that were not made public. This means that the cooperation agreements captured by the dummy variable are public ones only, that is, those where the signals to the voters on cooperation were well known. While this is exactly the influence we want to capture in the analysis, we ran the models without this variable, which did not alter our results in a substantive way. However, its elimination created the potential for omitted variable bias, which is why the results are reported below with these results included.

41 Contrary to over-nominations, both the LDP and JSP committed under-nominations, but they did so less frequently. In addition to this, while, by definition, under-nominations led both parties to lose district seats that they otherwise would have won had they nominated an additional candidate, we do not expect them to carry the same level of negative electoral impact as over-nominations. This is because these errors occurred in district elections where these two parties’ district vote shares were much higher than expected and all endorsed candidates obtained seats. Nonetheless, to determine if this was true, we estimated the models discussed below with LDP and JSP under-nominations included and found that coefficients were substantively and statistically insignificant. Moreover, further statistical tests showed that eliminating them from the models we estimate did not lead to omitted variable bias.

136 | Taiwan Journal of Democracy, Volume 8, No. 1
\[ Y_i^* = \alpha + X_{i-k} \beta + \varepsilon \quad i = 1405, \]

where \( Y^* \) is a continuously valued, unobserved variable estimating the efficiency (seat bonus) or the effectiveness (percentage of district seats) of the JSP’s electoral performance in the \( i \)th district election, and \( X_{i-k} \) is a one by eight vector containing the covariates. From the above discussion, recall that four of the covariates are continuous variables measuring the level of support captured by (1) the LDP, (2) the JCP, (3) the non-JCP opposition, and (4) independent candidates. The four remaining covariates are dummies, indicating (5) an over-nomination by the LDP, (6) an over-nomination by the JSP, (7) an opposition cooperation agreement that included the JSP, and (8) an opposition cooperation agreement that did not contain the JSP.\(^{42}\)

**The Electoral Performance of the JSP (Seat Bonuses)**

Defining the JSP’s performance as seat bonuses requires that we assemble the data used in the analysis in a panel/longitudinal format. This means that OLS is not the appropriate method of estimation because the error variances may not be consistent across both cross-sectional units (election districts) and time periods (district election years). Moreover, given that the data used for the analysis exhaust the population under consideration, we can correct for this problem by using a procedure that estimates a fixed-effects model, which provides for panel-corrected standard errors. The results of this estimation are presented in table 4.

Results for the model containing all of the covariates described above are presented in the “unrestricted model” column of the table. Most notable in these results is that coefficients on both types of cooperation agreements and direct electoral competition from non-JCP and unaffiliated (independent) candidates were not statistically significant.\(^{43}\) Thus, half of the model’s variables were statistically insignificant, which meant that our next task was to determine the extent to which the statistically insignificant coefficients added to the model’s overall explanatory power. We addressed this parameter-encompassing issue by using Joint-F tests, and we found that we could accept the null hypothesis that the parameters were equal to each other and zero only in the cases of cooperation agreements that included the JSP and vote shares captured by the non-JCP opposition and unaffiliated candidates. With this statistical information, we estimated a restricted model that retained the previous model’s statistically significant variables, votes for the LDP, and cooperation agreements without

---

\(^{42}\) In the second set of models in which the JSP’s performance is defined as the percentage of seats obtained in a district election, we included a lagged dependent variable as an additional covariate.

\(^{43}\) It is also true that the coefficient on direct electoral competition from the LDP was significant at the \( P > .10 \) level, but this changed when we included this variable in the restricted model.
the JSP but eliminated the other statistically insignificant variables. The results are presented in the right-most column of table 4.

Estimates for this restricted model make several points about the ability of the JSP to translate votes obtained in district elections into legislative seats. Interestingly, higher support for the LDP and JCP increased the JSP’s ability to translate district votes into seats, most likely by keeping votes away from the other parties of the non-JCP opposition, particularly those groups that left the JSP and endorsed their own candidates. Evidence for this is witnessed in the fact that the coefficient on this variable is large and negative in the unrestricted model.\textsuperscript{44} Evidence for this conclusion is also supported by the negative coefficient on the non-JSP cooperation agreement variable, which states clearly that cooperation among non-JCP opposition parties hurt the efficiency of the JSP’s district-level election performance.

Finally, results in table 4 indicate that the largest impacts on the efficiency of the JSP’s district-level performance stemmed from nomination errors. Specifically, when the LDP over-nominated, the JSP was somewhat better

\textsuperscript{44} See the discussion below on the results for table 5.
able to translate obtained votes into district seats, but JSP over-nominations outweighed this positive impact by nearly four times. In fact, the effect of over-nominations on the JSP’s electoral efficiency was well beyond that of all other factors combined.

**The Effectiveness of the JSP’s Electoral Performance: District Seat Shares**

Defining the JSP’s performance in district elections as the percent of a district’s seats it obtained involves data that range from 0 to 75 percent. This means that our dependent variable is truncated, which, again, means that OLS is not the most appropriate method for estimating our models. Consequently, we used a version of the Tobit procedure that accommodates our data being structured in a panel/longitudinal format. The results of this estimation are presented in table 5. We see that, when all of the variables included in the previous “unrestricted” model are examined, results are different in that coefficients on all variables were statistically significant, with the exception of that for the cooperation agreement which included the JSP. In light of this and the fact that maintaining this variable did not add to the explanatory power of the model, we estimated a restricted model without this variable; those results are presented in the right side of table 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Unrestricted Model</th>
<th>Restricted Model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coefficient</td>
<td>Z</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electoral Competition</td>
<td>-0.5632</td>
<td>-16.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-0.5974</td>
<td>-9.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-0.7124</td>
<td>-22.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-0.5813</td>
<td>-7.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation</td>
<td>-1.7707</td>
<td>-2.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Without JSP</td>
<td>-1.1577</td>
<td>-0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With JSP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nomination Errors</td>
<td>6.8843</td>
<td>10.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-23.2714</td>
<td>-20.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seat % t-1</td>
<td>0.0930</td>
<td>4.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>69.5799</td>
<td>27.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 1403
No. Groups 128
Wald Chi2 = 1414.28
Prob. > Chi2 = 0.0000
Rho = 0.1372

N = 1403
No. Groups 128
Wald Chi2 = 1412.78
Prob. > Chi2 = 0.0000
Rho = 0.1367
Table 5 shows that competition from the LDP, JCP, non-JCP opposition, and unaffiliated candidates all negatively affected the ability of the JSP’s candidates to win district seats directly (performance effectiveness). Moreover, the presence of a non-JSP cooperation agreement in a district election directly hurt the ability of JSP candidates to win district seats. Finally, nomination errors had a significant impact on the ability of the JSP to obtain district seats. Specifically, when the LDP committed an over-nomination, the ability of JSP candidates to win a seat increased, but this positive effect dropped by more than four times when the JSP committed an over-nomination. Indeed, these results suggest that the inability of the JSP to render error-free nominations was the single most important factor contributing to the decline of its performance effectiveness.

Conclusion: Direct and Indirect Factors in the JSP’s Decline

Our remaining task is to place these results in the larger context of the JSP’s nearly lethal electoral decline by showing how much the party hurt itself and discussing what, if anything, it could have done differently to preserve some of its hemorrhaging support. As mentioned above, despite its optimistic expectations in the early postwar years, the JSP’s electoral fortunes were marked by a significant secular decline. As the above analysis has shown, this decline occurred both in terms of the ability of the party to translate obtained district votes into lower-house seats (performance efficiency) and the ability of its candidates to compete more effectively with other endorsed and unaffiliated candidates to obtain legislative seats (performance effectiveness).

The increased competition the JSP faced on its left and right flanks contributed significantly to its electoral decline in both ways. Evidence for this is witnessed in the statistically significant, negative coefficient on the variable identifying non-JCP cooperation agreements in which the JSP did not participate. These agreements hurt the party’s performance efficiency in that they impaired its ability to translate district votes into legislative seats (tables 4 and 5). Evidence for this is also found in the fact that the increased vote shares of all other parties and unaffiliated candidates throughout the period under consideration directly impaired the ability of the JSP’s candidates to win legislative seats in district elections (table 5). Naturally, competition from the LDP hurt the JSP’s candidates most, but, as table 4 indicates, competition from former JSP members—combined with CGP candidates—had a significant negative effect, even more than that of the JCP and unaffiliated candidates. If the JSP had faced competition only from CGP candidates, the negative impact would have been substantially reduced,45 telling us that, if the party had been

45 We examined the impact of the CGP candidates alone and its coefficient was not statistically significant.
able to bridge its ideological divisions, it would have been able to preserve some of its dwindling support.

The results presented above also show that nomination errors had an extremely large negative effect on the efficiency and effectiveness of the JSP’s district election performance. To present this relationship more clearly, we calculated the JSP’s predicted seat bonuses and seat shares using estimates from the restricted models presented above, and then compared these values to those we obtained under different nomination scenarios. Figure 2 plots the results we obtained for the efficiency of the JSP’s performance in district elections from 1958 through 1993.

The data in figure 2 represent the predicted value of the JSP’s seat bonuses, and the lines extending horizontally from each dot represent the standard

---

46 The approach developed in this essay was to identify nomination errors and then calibrate their impact on the electoral performance of parties in elections in countries employing similar rules. This included Korea for a short period under Park Chung-Hee, and Taiwan for elections held from 1992 through 2004. See, for example, Dennis Patterson and Hans Stockton, “Strategies, Institutions, and Outcomes under SNTV in Taiwan, 1992-2004,” Journal of East Studies 10, no. 1 (2010): 31-59.

deviations of these predicted values. As the figure also reveals, the JSP’s predicted seat bonus for the period under consideration was just above zero (3.39 percent); while the confidence intervals overlap, this predicted value increased when the LDP committed an over-nomination in a district election (9.31 percent). Far more dramatic, however, was the impact of a JSP over-nomination. As figure 2 reveals, the predicted value of this party’s seat bonuses was almost twenty points lower (-19.32 percent) than when it over-nominated. While this value increased if the LDP committed an over-nomination at the same time, the increase was not nearly enough to overcome the negative impact of this type of JSP nomination error.

Figure 3 reveals that JSP over-nominations took a similar toll on the effectiveness of its district election performance. For the period under consideration, the JSP’s predicted overall seat share was 27.89 percent, but this share was reduced to just under 5 percent when the party committed an over-nomination. As the data in the figure also indicate, this predicted value increased when the LDP committed an over-nomination at the same time, but the difference was not large enough to be statistically significant.

Previous studies of Japan’s main socialist opposition party have no doubt captured the JSP’s self-inflicted electoral problems. Our results built on these findings by showing what the party could have done to stave off the electoral decline it experienced. Specifically, the results presented above indicate the importance of the party’s having bridged its ideological division to avoid the loss of right-wing groups. The results also show the importance of the JSP’s avoidance of nomination errors, a task rendered more difficult as electoral
competition increased. We hope that the results have moved scholars closer to a more complete explanation for the JSP’s electoral decline, and offer a way that the electoral trajectories of Japan’s other parties can be investigated.
Appendix
Estimates of $\beta_1$ and $\beta_2$ for the JSP by Election

1958: $\beta_1 = 22,674$  $\beta_2 = -35.87$  $R^2 = .8935$  Prob. $> F$ 0.0000
1960: $\beta_1 = 32,340$  $\beta_2 = -171.91$  $R^2 = .8604$  Prob. $> F$ 0.0000
1963: $\beta_1 = 32,935$  $\beta_2 = -123.45$  $R^2 = .9153$  Prob. $> F$ 0.0000
1967: $\beta_1 = 33,374$  $\beta_2 = -161.02$  $R^2 = .9013$  Prob. $> F$ 0.0000
1969: $\beta_1 = 30,880$  $\beta_2 = -150.89$  $R^2 = .8740$  Prob. $> F$ 0.0000
1972: $\beta_1 = 44,492$  $\beta_2 = -305.84$  $R^2 = .8123$  Prob. $> F$ 0.0000
1976: $\beta_1 = 43,521$  $\beta_2 = -264.32$  $R^2 = .7989$  Prob. $> F$ 0.0000
1979: $\beta_1 = 43,834$  $\beta_2 = -284.47$  $R^2 = .8163$  Prob. $> F$ 0.0000
1980: $\beta_1 = 53,438$  $\beta_2 = -410.13$  $R^2 = .8232$  Prob. $> F$ 0.0000
1983: $\beta_1 = 53,984$  $\beta_2 = -475.83$  $R^2 = .8049$  Prob. $> F$ 0.0000
1986: $\beta_1 = 53,409$  $\beta_2 = -451.30$  $R^2 = .7942$  Prob. $> F$ 0.0000
1990: $\beta_1 = 67,527$  $\beta_2 = -655.03$  $R^2 = .7510$  Prob. $> F$ 0.0000
1993: $\beta_1 = 74,488$  $\beta_2 = -2799.18$  $R^2 = .8519$  Prob. $> F$ 0.0000