

Is the model of power under Abe administrations sustainable?

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Abe paradox: stable popularity of PM without national consensus towards sensitive political issues

- After returning to power in late 2012, Abe is in power almost 5 years. If he retains power until 2021, he will become the prime-minister with the longest tenure in postwar history, exceeding 8 years of Eisaku Sato.
- Initially high ratings of Abe cabinets were traditionally associated mostly with the fatigue from a long 'mosaic' period of political instability
- Traditionally every new cabinet starts with high ratings against certain public expectation for a better political commitment, but in a year or so usually there is a noticeable decline of popularity .But with Abe it did not happen.
- The situation with Abe's popularity looks particularly paradoxical given that the Japanese public opinion, judging by the polls, did not support the "patriotic" views of the Prime Minister unquestionably.



Abe's personal image meeting public expectations

- Rise of nationalist sentiment against aggravated international environment (relations with China, South Korea, Russia)
- Public demand for a strong and charismatic leader – in contrast with previous prime-ministers after Koizumi
- Abe as bearer of political tradition (the factor of political dynasty), especially in foreign policy matters (eg. Japan-Russia relations)
- Apt use of media capabilities for personal image-making
- Slogan style of communication with society



Mobilization role of slogans

- Japanese political culture is characterized by a wide use of slogans, which play the role of a communication tool between government and society
- Slogans are aimed at solving mobilization tasks (the slogans of the Meiji era *fukoku kyohei* "Rich country – a strong army", *datsua nyuo* ("Leave Asia and enter Europe") etc.



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Apt use of concise and succinct slogans

- *chiho sosei* ("reviving regions"),
- *josei katsuyaku* ("the public activity of women"),
womenomics
- *ichioku katsuyaku* ("activity one hundred million",
an allusion to the entire adult population of Japan),
- *hatarikata kaikaku* ("reform of employment"), etc.
- *abonomics*
- these slogans were abstract and allowed for various interpretations, creating a semblance of government activity and of a regular updating of the political agenda and arousing high public expectations.



Abe's image as "Savior" of Japan which avoided globalization-related problems

- No serious conflicts associated with mass immigration
- No ethnic and sectarian conflicts
- Fair situation in the sphere of public security
- The problem of terrorism is not acute compared
- Stable situation in the socio-economic sphere, low unemployment rate etc.
- Feeling of "gratitude" to the leader



Problems in Abe's style of management

- Imperfect system of political decision-making, fraught with the risk of serious strategic miscalculations
- Loss of the traditions of inner-party democracy
- Increasing role of authoritarian methods in the Abe style of management
- Contrast to the model of decision-making under the "1955 system" (intraparty discussions, emphasis on negotiation methods and consensus)
- No discussion of even the most resonant and controversial bills within the party political structures ("conspiracy act", "public safety act", "casino act", etc.)



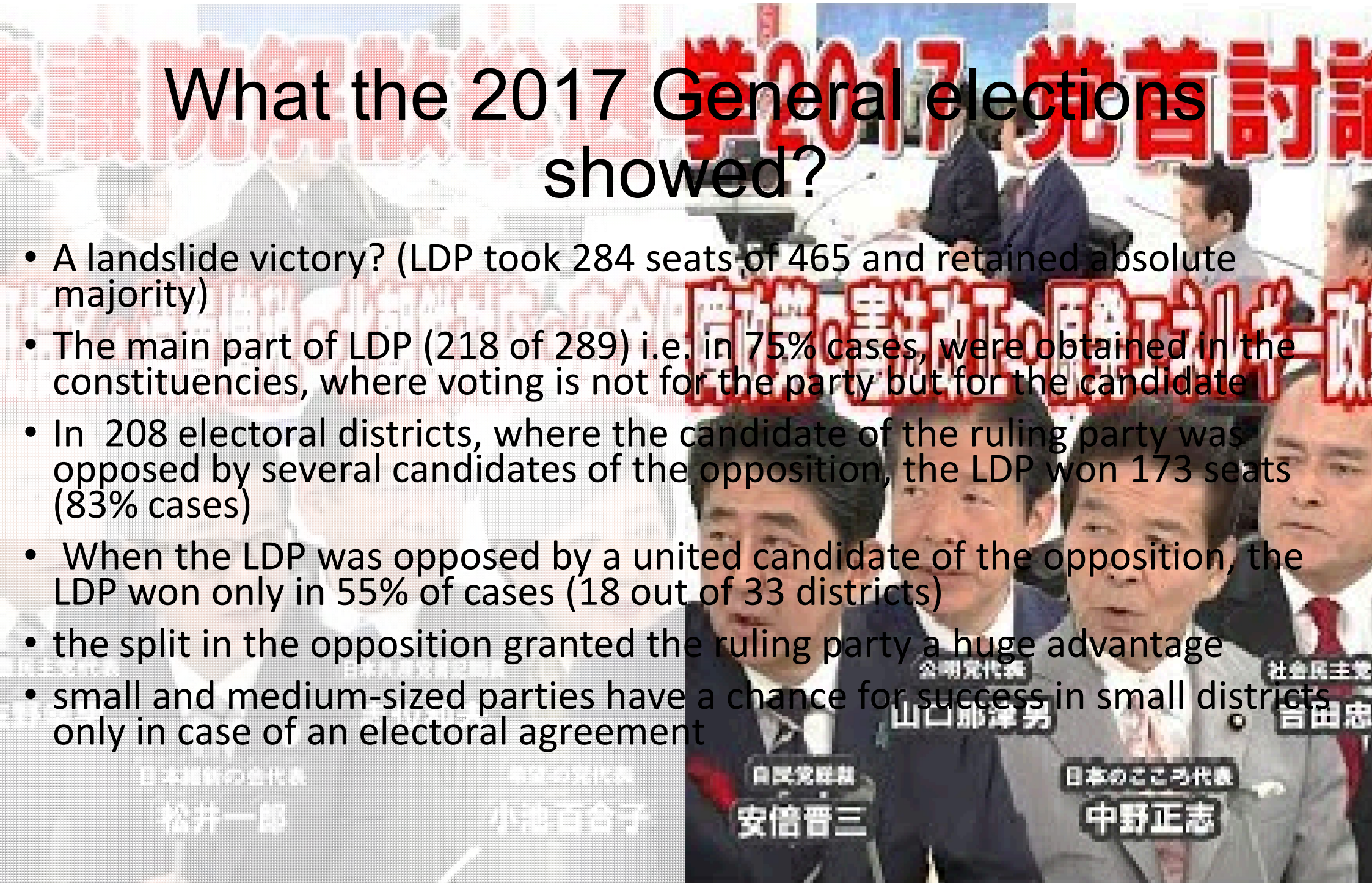
Unpleasant implications of 'Abe style' for the LDP management

- Lack reliable mechanisms of succession of power in the LDP
- Fear of split in the party ranks and its negative implications on the electoral commitment of the party
- Lack of self-criticism within the LDP
- Low potential for political expertise and political alternatives among the MPs,
- No motives for self-education
- Actual contempt for political ethics (political scandals "Moritomo Gakuen" , "Kake Gakuen" etc.)



What the 2017 General elections showed?

- A landslide victory? (LDP took 284 seats of 465 and retained absolute majority)
- The main part of LDP (218 of 289) i.e. in 75% cases, were obtained in the constituencies, where voting is not for the party but for the candidate
- In 208 electoral districts, where the candidate of the ruling party was opposed by several candidates of the opposition, the LDP won 173 seats (83% cases)
- When the LDP was opposed by a united candidate of the opposition, the LDP won only in 55% of cases (18 out of 33 districts)
- the split in the opposition granted the ruling party a huge advantage
- small and medium-sized parties have a chance for success in small districts only in case of an electoral agreement



Will a model of the dominant party («the 1955 system 2.0») revive?

- The formation of an opposition to the LDP rule in the past have always occurred in Japan within the framework of the logic of formal alternative, i.e. the priority of the organizational sheath over the ideological content
- The main opposition party in this sense was no more than an amorphous aggregation of moderate forces of different ideological orientation unified by the only idea of displacing the LDP from power
- The ideology for this party was of minor importance, and it was a motley and patchwork coalition involving many different, often irreconcilable political forces and groups (the New Frontiers Party in 1994-1997 and the Democratic Party in 1998 – 2017)

Government Formation: Parliamentary Systems

Party system	Assembly	Government
One-party Dominant	One-party majority	Dominant party government – J, Sweden, South
Two-party system	One-party majority or near-majority	One-party government with swings between two main parties: Greece, Norway, Spain, UK.
Multi-party systems	Multi-party assemblies	Coalition governm

Possible scenarios of the development of the LDP rule

- Fixing the authoritarian model of power by the Abe successors?
- Returning to the model of dispersed power ('renaissance of faction politics') with the considerable component of 'grey zone politics'?
- Elaborating a new and unprecedentedly democratic model of the party management and organization?
- Institutional, structural, ideological and philosophical implications.