

## Preface and Acknowledgments

Democracy is supposed to be the antithesis of hereditary rule by family dynasties. And yet, looking around the world, one sees that “democratic dynasties” continue to persist. They have been conspicuously prevalent in Japan, where more than a third of all legislators and two-thirds of all cabinet ministers in recent years have come from families with a history in parliament. Such a high proportion of dynasties is comparatively unusual and has sparked serious concerns over whether democracy in Japan is functioning properly.

In this book, I introduce a comparative theory based on a framework of supply and demand to explain the causes and consequences of dynasties in democracies like Japan. I argue that members of dynasties enjoy an “inherited incumbency advantage” in all three stages of a typical political career: selection, election, and promotion. However, I argue that the nature and extent of this advantage, as well as its consequences for elections and representation, varies by the institutional context of electoral rules and candidate selection methods within parties. In the late 1980s, roughly half of all new candidates in Japan’s long-ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) were political legacies. However, electoral system reform in 1994 and subsequent party reforms have changed the incentives for party leaders to rely on dynastic politics in candidate selection. A new pattern of party-based competition is slowly replacing the old pattern of competition based on localized family fiefdoms. Nevertheless, path dependence and a continue supply of legacy hopefuls impedes more dramatic change.

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A final note is warranted in light of recent events. In late September 2017, as this book was already in production, Prime Minister Abe Shinzō decided to call a snap election for the House of Representatives. Continuing the trend set in motion after Japan's 1994 electoral reform and accelerated since the LDP's 2005 party reforms, the new legacy candidates who emerged in 2017 were mostly the offspring of longtime incumbents from existing dynasties who were first elected under the pre-1994 electoral system, or of those who had died suddenly in office. These include the sons, grandsons, or brothers of former prime ministers and other cabinet ministers: Hatoyama Tarō, Nakasone Yasutaka, Hiranuma Shōjirō, Kōmura Masahiro, Yasuoka Hirotake, Yosano Makoto, Kimura Jirō, Wakabayashi Kenta, and Kaneko Shunpei.

But it was not smooth sailing for many of these new legacies. Hatoyama and Hiranuma did not get the LDP's nomination and had to run with the label of the newly formed Party of Hope and as an independent, respectively. Nakasone was forced to run on the Kita Kanto proportional representation (PR) list rather than in his grandfather's old district in Gunma prefecture (where the party's nomination had already been granted to another legacy incumbent from the PR tier, Omi Asako). He, along with Kōmura, Kimura, and Kaneko, managed to win seats, but Yasuoka, Hiranuma, and Hatoyama were all rejected by the voters. Yosano was ranked near the bottom of the LDP's Tokyo PR list and narrowly lost out on a seat. Wakabayashi, who previously served in the House of Councillors, narrowly missed winning a seat through the Hokuriku Shinetsu PR list. Another new LDP legacy candidate, Shiraishi Hiroki, whose father, Tōru, had served only two terms before dying suddenly in office, was also defeated. Hokkaido 11th District featured a contest between Nakagawa Yūko (LDP), the incumbent widow of former finance minister Nakagawa Shōichi, and Ishikawa Kaori, a former television announcer and wife of disgraced former Democratic Party of Japan MP Ishikawa Tomohiro. Ishikawa ran with the nomination of the newly formed Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan, and defeated the LDP incumbent.

Thus, although many new legacy candidates ran in 2017, the pattern continues to reflect changes in supply and demand in dynastic candidate selection, as described in the chapters of this book. Legacy candidates are still emerging, and often getting the nomination of the LDP, but these legacies tend to be descendants of powerful existing dynasties with strong supply-side incentives to run. Those who try to succeed weaker incumbents, or who offer less to the party leadership in terms of their other qualities, have a harder time getting nominated and elected. Over time, the changes set in motion by Japan's institutional reforms will continue to reduce the prevalence of dynastic politics in the LDP.

Daniel M. Smith  
Cambridge, MA  
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# Dynasties and Democracy

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