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POLITICAL CHANGE IN JAPAN: ELECTORAL BEHAVIOR, PARTY REALIGNMENT, AND THE KOIZUMI REFORMS



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HOW LONG ARE KOIZUMI'S COATTAILS? PARTY-LEADER VISITS IN THE 2005 ELECTION

Kenneth Mori McElwain¹

On August 8, 2005, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi called for snap elections for the House of Representatives. The precipitating cause was the intra-LDP (Liberal Democratic Party) division over Koizumi's aggressive push to privatize Japan Post. Although Koizumi had threatened to dissolve the Lower House should the cabinet bill fail, Shizuka Kamei—an LDP faction boss and one of the most vocal critics of privatization—called his bluff. While the reform plan squeaked through the Lower House despite significant LDP defection, postal privatization was blocked in the Upper House when thirty LDP members voted against the measure (Maclachlan, chapter 8, this volume). True to his word—and to the surprise of many observers, including the “postal rebels”—Koizumi followed on with his threat and vowed to put the issue to the voters.

The Lower House election on September 11, 2005, was dubbed “Koizumi theater,” due to the media's extensive coverage of the pitched battle between the incumbent “postal rebels,” who had been kicked out of the LDP, and Koizumi's handpicked “assassins,” who were selected to represent his reform initiative. When the election campaign kicked off on August 30, even entertainment programs spent hours dissecting the Shakespearean intersections of loyalty, betrayal, and conflict among these former copartisans (opinion was split on who betrayed whom). Somewhat absent from the public debate were the actual opposition parties, notably the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), which had also voted against the postal-reform bill but was left outside of Koizumi's theater, looking in. When the votes were finally tabulated, Koizumi had carried the day: the LDP won 296 seats (a +60-seat swing)—its largest share ever—while the DPJ won only 113 seats (a -64-seat swing).

While these events offer insights into a number of interesting phenomena, such as how (not) to bargain in parliament or how (not) to maintain party cohesion, this chapter focuses on one question: how important were Koizumi's coattails to the LDP's victory? When Koizumi was first elected as LDP president and Japanese prime minister in 2001, his lioness hair, telegenic style, and reformist aura propelled him to support ratings of over 80 percent. While these stratospheric numbers fell over subsequent years, Koizumi's approval rating three weeks before the 2005 election was a still-robust 53 percent (*Asahi Shimbun*,

August 20, 2005). Koizumi's popularity gave him political leverage that few of his predecessors possessed. To the extent that an association with Koizumi bestowed some reflected glory, the LDP could use Koizumi's popularity as a tactical tool to boost the electoral prospects of its candidates.

I analyze Koizumi's "coattail effects" in the 2005 election in two related ways. The first half of this chapter deals with *strategic resource allocation*: which electoral districts did Koizumi, the LDP president, and Katsuya Okada, the DPJ president, visit leading up to the election? Because the legal campaign period in Lower House elections is only twelve days long, leader visits are scarce resources that parties must distribute discriminately to win the maximum number of seats. The second half of this chapter analyzes the *effects* of leader visits, disaggregating two types of coattail effects: *collective* (the candidate belongs to the same party as a popular leader) and *selective* (the leader visits the candidate's district during the campaign).

Combining local polling data, newspaper reports on party-leader visits, and a variety of statistical tests, I demonstrate that the LDP adopted an aggressive swing-voter approach while the DPJ pursued a defensive, incumbent-protection strategy. Although both Koizumi and Okada focused their visits on districts with narrow predicted margins of victory, Koizumi favored new candidates or previous runners-up in regions where his personal popularity was high. On the other hand, Okada campaigned on behalf of incumbent candidates irrespective of his own popularity in their districts. As for the substantive effects of these visits, I find no evidence of electoral coattails for Okada, but Koizumi's overall popularity and targeted visits produced consequential improvements in the LDP vote share. Compared to the mean, a one-standard-deviation (3 percent) increase in Koizumi's local popularity raised the LDP candidate's vote share by about 1 percent. If Koizumi actually visited a district, then the LDP candidate received an *additional* boost of 2.4 percent. Approximately 15 percent of electoral races in the 2003 and 2005 elections were decided by margins smaller than 3 percent, suggesting that Koizumi's coattails were critical to the LDP's success.

In the next two sections, I review the literature on strategic resource allocation, coattail effects, and party-leader visits in greater detail. A description and analysis of the statistical methods and findings follow. The final section consists of a discussion of this study's implications.

Party Effort, Resource Allocation, and Coattail Effects

A variety of factors explain election outcomes, some of which deal with national trends and others with local conditions. An example of the former is public perceptions of leader competence: better macroeconomic performance yields higher vote shares for parties in power (Lewis-Beck 1988; Inoguchi 1982; Powell and Whitten 1993). An example of the latter is the importance of candidate quality: research conducted by Jacobson (1989) and Scheiner (2005) indicates

that "strong" candidates, especially former local officeholders, are better equipped to win national races than those with no political experience.

An important component of electoral success is strategic party behavior, particularly nomination coordination. Under the pre-1993 electoral system of multimember districts (MMDs) under a single nontransferable vote (SNTV), Japanese parties needed to optimize candidate nominations in order to avoid splitting their votes among too many copartisans (Browne and Patterson 1999; Christensen 2000). The 1994 introduction of the *heiritsu-sei* system, with parallel single-member district (SMD) and proportional representation (PR) tiers, simplified coordination efforts. Because only one candidate can win outright in the SMDs, Duvergerian pressures have taken hold, and Japan has been moving toward a two-party (or at least a two-camp) system (Reed 2007).² In recent years, the LDP has coordinated nominations with its coalition partner, the Komeito (or Komei), while the DPJ has taken steps to avoid overnomination with other progressive parties.³ The primary explanation for nomination coordination is strategic resource allocation: in the short run, parties will only compete where their prospects are strong, and voters and activists should only support candidates with some hope of winning (Cox 1997; Duverger 1954; Reed 1991). As Weiner points out (chapter 5, this volume), resource allocation based on short-term horizons should result in incumbents running unopposed where their support base is strong, and two-party competition where victory margins are smaller.

This chapter focuses on a second side of the resource allocation problem: party effort. An implicit assumption of the strategic entry/coordination literature is that running for office is actually costly for political parties. But entering an election race is relatively cheap; the true costs accrue from trying to *win*. Parties can nominate candidates where they have no hope of winning and spend very little money on the campaign. They may do so to build a foothold in districts with little current following, or they may simply allow a rich, independent candidate who needs no financial support to wear the party's mantle. In measurement terms, candidate nominations are an imperfect way of assessing strategic behavior, because this does not take into account how much effort parties put into winning each seat. To accurately capture party strategy, we need a more precise measure of how much and where parties expend scarce resources.

The standard metric of party effort in political science literature is campaign expenditures. Damore and Hansford (1999) find that the campaign committees of American political parties allocate disproportionately more money to marginal districts in House of Representatives elections. Parties can also influence campaign war chests indirectly: Jacobson, Kernell, and Jeffrey (2004) show that presidents can help candidates raise money through targeted fund-raising efforts.

While money is undoubtedly one of the most revealing signs of campaign effort, a similar analysis is difficult to conduct in Japan because of rigid legal constraints. On the one hand, running in Lower House elections is not free: candidates need to pay a 3 million yen deposit to run in SMDs and 6 million yen

for the PR tier. These deposits are meant to discourage frivolous competition, since candidates forfeit their money if they fail to win a minimal number of votes. While these sums are nonnegligible, particularly for independent candidates, they constitute a relatively small share of total campaign expenditures for the major political parties. The bulk of electoral spending is for the campaign process itself, particularly wages for staffers, office rental fees, and other administrative costs. The maximum spending limit for individual candidates is set by law, and in the 2005 election, varied by district between 22 and 28 million yen.⁴ Restrictions on political *parties*, however, are much more lax: parties can hire as many staff members as they want, and TV advertisements and transportation costs for campaign speeches do not count toward the legal spending ceiling. While parties are required to file reports on direct monetary transfers to politicians, these ancillary expenditures are not itemized, making it difficult to gauge how much money was spent per candidate during the campaign.

Instead, I use a different metric to assess party effort and resource allocation: campaign visits by party leaders, or *yuuzei*. The electoral salience of leader visits plays a prominent role in the expanding literature on the “presidentialization of parliamentary politics” (Poguntke and Webb 2005). Because prime ministers are selected by other legislators, not elected directly by voters, the individual appeal of party leaders has received less attention in parliamentary regimes than under presidentialism. Over the last 20 years, however, media coverage of parliamentary leaders has grown rapidly. Party leaders receive increasingly more news coverage, and it has become commonplace to see telegenic leaders featured prominently in television advertisements. Japan has been no exception: Krauss and Nyblade (2005) report a steady increase in the number of newspaper articles on the prime minister, the number of prime ministers’ campaign visits, and the share of voters who rely on TV news to make ballot choices.

This newfound “cult of the party leader,” of which Koizumi is an exemplar, has profound electoral implications. Specifically, party leaders should be able to generate coattail effects—defined as the extent to which the popularity of the party leader affects the electoral fortunes of that party’s candidates. A prime minister’s coattails have two types of effects, which I term collective and selective. *Collective* benefits are the marginal added value of the party leader’s popularity relative to the party’s overall popularity. A voter who has little affection for the LDP or for his district’s LDP candidate may still vote for the LDP because he wants Koizumi to stay in power. The narrower, *selective* effect is derived from the strategic allocation of party-leader visits. In addition to the collective gains from being part of “Koizumi’s LDP,” an LDP candidate may benefit from having Koizumi visit her district, give a stump speech at her side in front of a crowded train station, and otherwise impress voters with the visual image of Koizumi and the candidate linked together.

Much like campaign expenditures, the allocation of leader visits is subject to strategic decision-making. For Lower House elections, the Public Office Election Law (POEL) restricts stumping on behalf of candidates to the official

twelve-day campaign period (McElwain 2008). Accordingly, the LDP should ration visits to those districts where the marginal, selective effects of a Koizumi visit would generate the highest returns. Even in a relatively small country such as Japan, party leaders are hard-pressed to travel to all three hundred SMDs in this short time frame. An examination of which districts were visited by party leaders allows us to analyze how much and where parties decide to expend the most effort in winning electoral races.

The Logic of Party-Leader Visits

To analyze the allocation of party-leader visits, information was gathered from a variety of media sources. While all political parties initially listed leader visits on their Web sites, this practice was quickly blocked by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication, which informed the DPJ and LDP on September 2, 2005, that updating party or candidate home pages “was most likely in violation of the Public Office Election Law” (*Yomiuri Shimbun*, September 3, 2005).⁵ As such, the bulk of campaign-visit data is gathered from the national and regional editions of the *Yomiuri* and *Asahi* newspapers, especially the *Asahi*’s daily reporting of the prime minister’s movements. In practice, it is extremely difficult to compile complete data on the precise visit locations of all party leaders, much less lower-ranked officials, because of the aforementioned proscription on self-advertisement by parties and the vague way that most visits are described in the news (for example, “Koizumi traveled around central Tokyo today . . .”). Therefore, this chapter focuses only on the district-level visits of the two major party leaders—Koizumi of the LDP and Okada of the DPJ—for which I have complete data.⁶

Allocation of Party-Leader Visits

Table 7.1 lists some descriptive information on party-leader visits.⁷ Koizumi—despite not campaigning on September 1 due to a state visit by the Thai prime minister—visited 72 politicians in 18 prefectures. Okada focused on metropolitan areas, visiting 75 separate districts in 16 prefectures, although 12 districts received an additional, second visit. In the last 3 days of the campaign period (September 8–10), Koizumi and Okada visited 24 and 26 districts, respectively. Koizumi traveled a total of 10,800 kilometers over the 12-day campaign period, approximately 1,700 kilometers more than Okada (*Asahi Shimbun*, September 11, 2005). The most active party bosses were Mizuho Fukushima of the Socialist Democratic Party of Japan (SDPJ) and Takenori Kanzaki of the Komeito, both of whom accumulated extra kilometers visiting candidates in Okinawa. The total distance traveled by party leaders was less than in the 2003 Lower House elections, due to a typhoon that hit Japan between September 5 and September 7, grounding most airplanes and forcing many candidates to halt campaigning for at least one day.

Table 7.1 Party-Leader Visits, August 30–September 10, 2005

Leader (Party)	Koizumi (LDP)	Okada (DPJ)	Shii (JCP)	Fukushima (SDP)	Kanzaki (Komeito)
Total SMD candidates	290	289	275	38	9
No. of districts visited	72	75			
Visited twice	1	12			
Visited in last 3 days of campaign	24	26			
Head-to-head districts visited*	47	53			
Incumbents visited	28	63			
Prefectures visited	18	16	17	20	8
Total kilometers traveled**	10,800	9,100	8,100	16,500	12,100

Source: *Asahi Shimbun* and *Yomiuri Shimbun*, various editions.

Note: * Head-to-head: LDP vs. DPJ only or LDP vs. DPJ vs. JCP only; $n = 203$.

** From *Asahi Shimbun*, September 11, 2005.

We can tease apart the data to get at the political context of these visits. Overall, there were 203 “head-to-head” matches between the LDP and DPJ, defined as a two-horse race between official LDP and DPJ candidates or a three-party competition that also involved the Communist Party.⁸ Neither Koizumi nor Okada placed any extra emphasis on these districts, but one distinctive difference was that Okada spent more time with his party’s incumbents. This suggests that the DPJ may have been taking the more conservative approach of defending existing seats rather than trying to win new ones.⁹

While the literature on party-leader visits is relatively new, there are roughly two schools of thought on the distribution of scarce resources. The first strategy is *defensive*: parties should allocate assets where their popularity is the strongest. Given that voter choice can be fickle, a bird in the hand is worth more than two in the bush, so parties should solidify their core base rather than overreach by trying to attract independent or weakly sympathetic voters. The second strategy is *offensive*: parties should target districts where the expected margin of victory is the smallest. If the difference between winning and losing a seat is a few percentage points, a party-leader visit may create a large enough swing to capture a marginal seat.

Previous studies have found mixed support for both defensive and offensive strategies. In their analysis of George W. Bush’s stump visits during the 2002 House of Representatives midterm elections, Herrnson and Morris (2006) find that the president was more likely to visit competitive districts. On the other hand, Belanger, Carty, and Eagles’ (2003) analysis of leaders’ tours in the 2000 Canadian elections shows that established parties (the Liberals, Conservatives, and New Democrats) tended to defend their turfs, while the smaller, regional parties (Alliance and Bloc Québécois) tried to expand their national popularity by visiting districts where their support was relatively weak.

Effects of Leader Visits

Estimating the selective coattail effects of party-leader visits can be tricky, as there are three plausible benefits from leader visits—advertising, mobilization, and association—not all of which deal with coattails per se. *Advertising* effects are media-coverage externalities generated by the activities of party leaders. Because reporters and TV cameras follow party leaders during the campaign period, public speeches by Koizumi or Okada may receive TV airtime that evening and a brief write-up in the next day’s newspapers. Even if explicit support for the candidate is not included in the media’s coverage, any mention of that candidate’s name and party affiliation serves as free advertisement. *Mobilization* effects are psychological rewards for party activists that generate indirect benefits to candidates. From an instrumental perspective, an undecided voter may not learn anything new from listening to a brief stump speech by Koizumi from one hundred meters away. Party volunteers who spend hours walking around with leaflets and making cold calls to voters, however, are more likely to be energized by seeing their party’s star. This can, in turn, generate benefits, as enthusiastic campaign volunteers may work harder on behalf of the party, thereby increasing the candidate’s vote share.

Technically speaking, neither the advertising nor mobilizational elements are functions of party-leader coattails, since the former is an epiphenomenal externality while the latter is conditional on the behavior of local activists. *Association* effects, however, are direct coattail benefits derived from the explicit linkage between the candidate and the party leader. When Koizumi or Okada claim that the candidate he is stumping for is valuable to the party and to the future of Japan, voters who have warm feelings toward either leader may transfer those sentiments to the local candidate.

The three effects—particularly advertising and association—can be difficult to disentangle. A TV report that shows Koizumi giving a speech in front of a major train station with candidate A at his side generates both airtime for that candidate (advertising) and a visual association between Koizumi and candidate A (association). Media tendencies and campaign regulations in Japan, however, suggest that associational effects outstrip advertising benefits. First, TV coverage of leader speeches tends to be very short and focuses narrowly on the

leaders themselves, making it unlikely that voters will even see the candidate's face. Second, Japanese newspapers are required to remain neutral in how they cover electoral campaigns. In practice, this means that many articles omit the candidate's name—sometimes with awkward phrasing—when covering a leader's visit.¹⁰ Take, for example, the following snippets from newspaper articles (the author's own translation from Japanese editions):

On the second day of the Lower House elections, DPJ president Okada gave a stump speech at JR Kokura Station in the North Kokura Ward of Kitakyushu City. . . *President Okada had come to support the DPJ incumbent in Fukuoka District 10 . . .* (*Yomiuri Shimbun*, "Shuuisen: Minshu Okada Daihyo ga Kitakyushu Iri," August 31, 2005, emphasis added)

The two coalition partners' leaders, Prime Minister Koizumi and Chief Representative Kanzaki Takenori of the Komeito, arrived back-to-back in Fukuoka on [September] 2 . . . *Just before 3 PM, Prime Minister Koizumi, who had visited Kurume to support the LDP's official candidate in Fukuoka District 6, stood on the campaign car . . .* (*Asahi Shimbun*, "Koizumi Shushou, Yuusei Tsuyoku Utae; Komei Kanzaki mo Fukuoka Iri," August 30, 2005, emphasis added)

The other plausible effect of leader visits—mobilization—is also likely to be small. The benefit of seeing the party leader is greatest for activists whose primary allegiance is to the party organization. Japanese campaign activists, however, are mostly members of the *koenkai*, or personal support networks, of individual politicians. While one can love the politician and the party simultaneously, the postal-reform conflict in the Diet tested the relationship between the LDP in parliament and the LDP on the ground. Thirty-seven Lower House politicians were expunged from the LDP for voting against the reform bill, and many others were embittered by Koizumi's decision to force a legislative vote without first ensuring intraparty consensus. At the same time, numerous local LDP politicians in prefectural and municipal assemblies defied the LDP's dictum to withdraw support from the purged politicians, choosing to back the postal rebels' independent candidacies instead. In the best of times, the mobilization effect of a Koizumi visit on local activists would have been small; in the 2005 election, it was most likely minimal.

Given the lack of consistent advertising and mobilization externalities, campaign visits are most likely to produce associational effects: the physical presence and popularity of the leader directly alters how voters perceive that party's candidate. As a result, any vote boosts from leader visits can be ascribed to coattail effects, which are the primary theoretical concern of this chapter.

Testing the Determinants of Party-Leader Visits

I analyze the allocation of party-leader visits using an original data set of district-level visits by Koizumi (LDP) and Okada (DPJ). Each case is one SMD, although the four SMD districts in Okinawa are omitted due to the lack of consistent survey data. The total sample size is $n = 296$.

The statistical tests are based on two related sets of dependent variables. First, I examine whether each party leader visited a given district during the entire twelve-day campaigning period. The dependent variables take the values [0, 1]: as shown in table 7.1, Koizumi traveled to 72 districts, while Okada traveled to 75 districts. Second, I adjust the dependent variable to measure whether Koizumi and Okada visited that district in the last three days of the campaign. On September 6, the *Asahi* and *Yomiuri* newspapers reported district-level results from their respective 150,000-person surveys, which included prefectural-level data on the popularity of different political parties, their leaders, and, most crucially, assessments of which districts were still competitive. That evening, the DPJ and LDP leaders met in Tokyo to review their campaign strategies for the homestretch. With each party armed with up-to-date information, I expect leader visits in the last three days to represent an intensified version of their earlier resource allocation strategies.

The statistical models incorporate independent variables that operationalize recent popular sentiment, past electoral performance, and district characteristics. Descriptive statistics are provided in appendix 7.A. Three of the explanatory variables are based on surveys. *Koizumi popularity* and *Okada popularity* measure the difference between the popularity of each party leader and their respective parties. The *Asahi Shimbun* (September 6, 2005) reports prefecture-specific survey responses to a variety of questions, including: (1) "Thinking of the future of Japanese politics, who do you expect more from: Prime Minister Koizumi or DPJ president Okada Katsuya?" and (2) "Which political party do you support?"¹¹ The two factors are related, but by subtracting DPJ support from Okada support (*Okada popularity*) and LDP support from Koizumi support (*Koizumi popularity*), we can estimate the coattail "length" of each party leader.¹² I expect both Koizumi and Okada to visit districts where their coattail effects will be strongest—that is, where the values of *Koizumi popularity* and *Okada popularity* are high. I also include *no party preference* to measure the electoral salience of political independents. *Ceteris paribus*, the preferences of independent voters are more likely to be swayed by small cues, and I expect party leaders to favor districts where *no party preference* is high.

Four independent variables capture the structure of competition in each district. *Assassin* is a dichotomous variable that equals "1" when the race involves an ex-LDP postal rebel and one of Koizumi's handpicked assassins. There were thirty-three assassin districts, and these races received the greatest television exposure during the campaign period. Because of their high profile, I expect the party leaders—particularly Koizumi—to favor these districts.

The variable *2003 margin* is the difference in vote share between the winner and the first runner-up in the 2003 Lower House elections. To the extent that future electoral performance correlates with past performance, the margin of victory in the last election is a good proxy for competitiveness in 2005.¹³ As such, the *2003 margin* allows us to estimate whether the LDP and DPJ used an offensive or defensive resource allocation strategy. *Incumbent* is a dichotomous variable that equals “1” where the party’s candidate is an incumbent. Similarly, the variable *new* tabulates whether the party’s candidate is a new challenger, defined as not having run in the 2003 election. For the DPJ analysis, *incumbent* and *new* measure only official DPJ candidates. For the LDP regressions, they include both LDP and Komeito candidates to better reflect the strong electoral coordination between the two parties.

Finally, I include geographical control variables that measure nonpolitical determinants of leader visits. Given the twelve-day limit on campaigns, the total time it takes to travel from party headquarters to a given district should affect the propensity of visits; party leaders should be less likely to visit remote districts, all things being equal. While measuring travel time can be tricky, I use two related variables: *distance_log*, which is the logged distance in kilometers between Nagatacho, the area of Tokyo where the Diet and many party headquarters are located, and the main city or township of each electoral district; and *distance_sq*, the square of *distance_log*. Given the geography and transportation options available in Japan, I hypothesize that those districts close to Tokyo (which one can travel to quickly by train) or those very far from Tokyo (reachable by airplane) require shorter travel time than districts that are at an intermediate distance.¹⁴

In models 1A and 1B, I use a logistic regression model to predict the incidence of Koizumi and Okada visits over the twelve-day campaign period. Table 7.2 reports the coefficients and standard errors from the statistical analysis.¹⁵ Since these coefficients are in log odds-ratios, and thus cannot be interpreted in a straightforward fashion, I will discuss the model results in terms of predicted probabilities.

One notable point of similarity is that both party leaders avoided districts where the margin of victory in the 2003 election was large. Holding all other variables at median values, a 1 percent increase in *2003 margin* reduces the probability of a Koizumi visit by 1.1 percent, and that of an Okada visit by 0.6 percent. A 5 percent increase in *2003 margin* reduces the probabilities of Koizumi and Okada visits by 5.4 percent and 2.5 percent, respectively.

On other measures, however, leader strategies diverged. Koizumi avoided shilling for LDP incumbents (–17.7 percent predicted probability), while Okada was much more likely to visit DPJ incumbents (+21.7 percent). Instead, Koizumi focused on areas where his personal popularity was high. A 1 percent increase in *Koizumi popularity* increases the predicted probability of his visit by 5.2 percent, while a 5 percent increase raises the probability of a visit by 32.4 percent. Surprisingly, Okada was *less* likely to visit districts where his popularity was strong, although the coefficient is small and not statistically significant. An

Table 7.2 The Location of Party-Leader Visits

Model: Logistic regression with robust standard errors (in parentheses)
DV: Visit by LDP and DPJ party leader prior to 2005 election

Variable	Entire campaign period		Last 3 days of campaign	
	1A: Koizumi	1B: Okada	2A: Koizumi	2B: Okada
<i>Constant</i>	12.55** (4.81)	4.74 (5.85)	7.65 (6.86)	-24.51*** (6.72)
<i>Distance_log</i>	-0.54 (0.28)	-0.09 (0.29)	-1.59** (0.53)	-0.16 (0.40)
<i>Distance_squared</i>	0.07 (0.04)	-0.03 (0.04)	0.25** (0.09)	-0.04 (0.06)
<i>Assassin</i>	0.90 (0.50)	-0.11 (0.61)	-0.37 (0.93)	-0.65 (1.14)
<i>Incumbent</i>	-1.02** (0.36)	1.64** (0.60)	-1.97*** (0.51)	
<i>New</i>	0.20 (0.46)	1.44 (0.76)	-1.16 (0.68)	
<i>2003 margin</i>	-5.27** (1.87)	-7.07*** (1.80)	-5.67 (3.69)	-9.10* (3.79)
<i>Koizumi popularity</i>	0.23*** (0.07)		0.42** (0.13)	
<i>Okada popularity</i>		-0.17 (0.19)		-0.59* (0.27)
<i>No party preference</i>	-0.33** (0.11)	-0.09 (0.16)	-0.28 (0.17)	0.68*** (0.19)
<i>N</i>	296	296	296	166
<i>Pseudo-R²</i>	0.185	0.227	0.274	0.208

Note: * = p<0.05; ** = p<0.01; *** = p<0.001.

interesting finding is that Koizumi favored districts where assassin candidates were running (+21.6 percent predicted probability), while Okada treated these districts like any other. Since the assassin districts were noted principally for the media’s attention on the horse race between postal rebels and Koizumi’s handpicked acolytes, it is not surprising that Koizumi viewed these areas as politically crucial. Okada, however, may have judged it inefficient to campaign in districts where his own candidates were the third wheel, as the *assassin* coefficient in model 1B is not statistically significant.

The most counterintuitive result is that neither leader focused on districts with a large proportion of political independents. A 1 percent increase in *no party preference* reduces the probability of a Koizumi visit by 6.6 percent, while a 5 percent increase reduces it by 22.9 percent. *No party preference* was neither substantively nor statistically significant for Okada in model 1B.

The determinants of party-leader visits vary slightly when we focus on the last three days of the campaign period (models 2A and 2B). The regression equations are different for Koizumi and Okada's visits, because Okada visited only incumbents between September 7 and September 10, suggesting that he intensified his earlier strategy of favoring sitting parliamentarians. To avoid statistical overdetermination, I run model 2B with only the districts where DPJ incumbents were involved ($N = 166$). Koizumi followed his earlier strategy of avoiding incumbents (-11.3 percent predicted probability), although he began to avoid new candidates as well (-8.3 percent predicted probability). Both leaders still favored districts where the vote margin in the last election was smallest, and this was particularly pronounced for Okada: a 5 percent increase in *2003 margin* reduced the predicted probability of an Okada visit by 3.4 percent.

The two leaders continued to diverge on the question of personal popularity. A 1 percent increase in *Koizumi popularity* generated a 5.3 percent increase in the likelihood that Koizumi would visit, while the same increase in *Okada popularity* lowered the probability of an Okada visit by 2.6 percent. Okada did, however, place greater emphasis on districts with more independents. While *no party preference* is statistically insignificant for Koizumi visits, a 1 percent increase in model 2B increases the likelihood of an Okada visit in the last three days by 5.6 percent.

Referring to the theoretical distinction in resource allocation strategies, the statistical findings suggest that Koizumi employed an offensive strategy while Okada was more defensive, and neither candidate radically changed his travel patterns over the course of the campaign period. Koizumi's visits were concentrated in the politically important assassin districts, and he avoided safer districts where LDP incumbents were running. Koizumi's travel schedule reflects an explicit attempt to take advantage of coattail effects, as his visits focused on areas where his personal popularity was higher. The DPJ, however, allocated leader visits to help protect the seats it already held. Instead of trying to win new seats, Okada spent most of his time supporting incumbents, and he displayed a surprising tendency to visit areas where his own popularity was relatively low.

Two interpretative points are in order. First, given the diminished media attention on the DPJ in this election compared to the last, Okada's defensive strategy may have been appropriate. Leading up to the previous 2003 Lower House elections, a *Yomiuri* survey (October 25, 2003) showed that 12 percent of voters intended to vote DPJ in SMDs (37 percent for the LDP), while 14 percent would do so in the PR tier (35 percent for the LDP). In a *Yomiuri* poll conducted before the 2005 campaign period (August 20, 2005), 14 percent of voters responded that they would vote for the DPJ candidate in the SMDs

(39 percent for the LDP), while 16 percent claimed the same in the PR tier (37 percent for the LDP). Although the LDP-DPJ gap in the two polls is similar, the increased attention on Koizumi's theater in 2005, particularly the fight of postal rebels versus assassins, meant that the DPJ was unlikely to create an upsurge in popularity during the campaign period, regardless of how many districts Okada visited.

Second, Okada's tendency to ignore his own regional popularity when picking visit destinations may be a function of his lower profile relative to Koizumi, which prompted the DPJ to adopt a tag-team strategy. Nationwide, the proportion of voters who trusted Okada to lead Japan was only 25 percent, compared to Koizumi's 42 percent support (*Asahi Shimbun*, September 5, 2005). Although he had been president of the DPJ since May 2004 and had led his party to electoral victory in the 2004 Upper House elections, Okada was a newcomer relative to party stalwarts such as Naoto Kan and Yukio Hatoyama. Indeed, the DPJ explicitly prioritized teamwork over Okada's personal appeal, as Kan, Hatoyama, and Ichiro Ozawa (whose Liberal Party had recently merged with the DPJ) were sent out to canvass as many districts as Okada. Whether this tag-team strategy worked is hard to judge without comprehensive visit data for the other party bosses, but when it came to Okada, the DPJ did not display any strategic effort to market their leader to generate selective coattail effects.

Testing the Effects of Party-Leader Visits

Having analyzed the determinants of leader-visit allocation, I now turn to the electoral impact of these visits. Here, I use a standard ordinary least squares (OLS) regression, where the dependent variable is each candidate's fractional *vote share* in 2005, ranging from 0 to 1. As with the previous section, I run separate regressions for LDP and DPJ candidates ($N = 286$ and 288, respectively). In addition to the independent variables from the previous section, I include some new measures that better capture baseline electoral outcomes.

First, I disaggregate *incumbent* into SMD winners and PR zombies. PR zombies are candidates who lost in the SMD race but were also listed in the PR tier and "resurrected" by virtue of having a close winner-to-runner-up vote ratio. *SMD incumbent* equals 1 for true incumbents who won the SMD race, while *PR zombie* equals 1 for resurrected PR incumbents. This distinction allows us to implicitly capture the past performance of incumbents, and hence their predicted vote shares in the current election. *Koizumi visit* and *Okada visit*, which were dependent variables in the previous section, are now included as independent variables. While I expect individual visits to improve candidate vote share, I also interact these visit variables with party-leader popularity to generate *Koizumi visit * Koizumi popularity* and *Okada visit * Okada popularity*. The additive popularity variables (*Koizumi visit*, *Okada visit*) capture the collective coattail effects that candidates obtain from belonging to the same party as their party leaders. The interaction term, however, allows us to tease out the

selective coattail benefits of association—that is, of being seen with a popular party leader. Finally, I include the control term *total candidates*, which counts the number of candidates competing in that district. Since the proliferation of candidates—even minor ones—can depress the winning vote share, I expect the coefficient for this variable to be negative.

Table 7.3 reports the results from the OLS regression of candidate vote share. The baseline category in these models is each party's returning challenger—candidates who competed but lost in the last election. Model 1 focuses on LDP candidates exclusively, while model 2 runs the equation for DPJ candidates. Almost all the control variables conform to stated expectations. For both LDP and DPJ candidates, *SMD incumbents* did better in the 2005 election, winning 10.1 percent and 11.1 percent more than their respective returning challengers. *PR zombies* also tended to win more votes, although the coefficient is statistically significant only for DPJ zombies (+4.5 percent). *New candidates* tended to do a bit worse for both parties, and as expected, the variable *total candidates* is statistically significant and negative in both models.

The theoretically interesting result concerns the coattail effects generated by party-leader visits. Unfortunately for the DPJ, Okada's visits generated no boosts in vote share, nor did the candidates benefit from Okada's collective coattails. *Okada visit*, *Okada popularity*, and the interaction term between the two are all substantively and statistically insignificant. To some extent, this could be an artifact of Okada's poor choice of districts to visit, analyzed in the previous section. By focusing on incumbent candidates, Okada may have missed out on opportunities to convert independent voters to his cause.

Model 1 shows, however, that Koizumi's visits generated substantial increases in the vote shares of LDP candidates. The three key variables—*Koizumi visit*, *Koizumi popularity*, and the interaction term—are all statistically significant. Because interpreting the value of the collective effects of Koizumi's coattails (*Koizumi popularity*) and the additional selective effects generated by his visits (*Koizumi visit* + *Koizumi visit* * *Koizumi popularity*) requires some tricky disentangling of the component and interaction terms, I display their predicted effects in figure 7.1.

The baseline case in figure 7.1 is a returning LDP challenger (*SMD incumbent*, *PR zombie*, *new* = 0) competing in a district with two other candidates (*total candidates* = 3). The horizontal axis is *Koizumi popularity*, or the difference between Koizumi's personal support rating and the LDP's collective popularity in each prefecture. The dotted line depicts collective coattail effects from belonging to the same party as Koizumi, while the solid line incorporates the selective effects of party-leader visits. Not surprisingly, LDP candidates did better where

Table 7.3 The Effects of Party-Leader Visits

Model: OLS with robust standard errors (in parentheses)

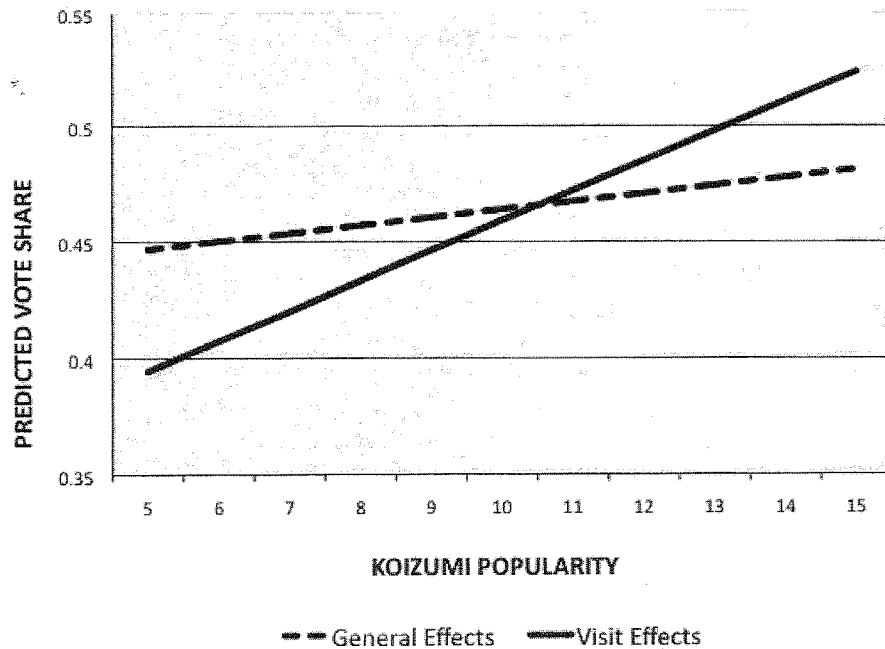
DV: Candidate vote share

	Model 1: LDP	Model 2: DPJ
<i>Constant</i>	0.551*** (0.029)	0.517*** (0.035)
<i>SMD incumbent</i>	0.101*** (0.009)	0.110*** (0.010)
<i>PR zombie</i>	0.015 (0.013)	0.045*** (0.011)
<i>New</i>	-0.054*** (0.010)	-0.015 (0.013)
<i>Koizumi popularity</i>	0.003* (0.002)	
<i>Koizumi visit</i>	-0.100** (0.033)	
<i>Koizumi visit * popularity</i>	0.009*** (0.003)	
<i>Okada popularity</i>		0.002 (0.003)
<i>Okada visit</i>		0.038 (0.076)
<i>Okada visit * popularity</i>		-0.007 (0.009)
<i>Total candidates</i>	-0.041*** (0.007)	-0.062*** (0.008)
<i>N</i>	286	288
<i>R</i> ²	0.584	0.509

Note: * = p<0.05; ** = p<0.01; *** = p<0.001

Koizumi's popularity was higher. Where Koizumi had a popularity level of 9 percent (the mean), LDP candidates had a predicted vote share of 46.1 percent. An increase in Koizumi's popularity of 5 percent raises the LDP candidate's vote share to 47.8 percent. While these coefficients are statistically significant, the actual substantive effect appears to be fairly small, as the difference between the maximum and minimal levels of Koizumi's popularity (12 percent) yields only a 4.2 percent vote swing.

Figure 7.1 Koizumi's Coattails and the LDP Vote Share



The more interesting finding, however, is the effect of *Koizumi popularity* when Koizumi actually visits the district (figure 7.1, solid line). As Koizumi's popularity rises, we see the predicted vote shares of LDP candidates improve rapidly. A 1 percent increase in Koizumi's popularity raises the vote share of LDP candidates who host Koizumi during the election campaign by approximately 1.3 percent. Given an average turnout of 343,192 voters per district, a 1.3 percent increase in vote share equates to approximately 4,460 voters who changed their ballot choice by virtue of a Koizumi visit. As indicated earlier, Koizumi tended to visit districts where his own popularity was higher, and thus was more likely to affect election outcomes. Koizumi's median popularity in visited districts is 11 percent, compared to 9 percent in areas he did not visit; this difference alone generates a 2.6 percent swing in predicted vote share. While the average margin of victory between the SMD winner and the first runner-up in 2005 was 12.4 percent, approximately 15 percent of districts had margins smaller than 2.6 percent, suggesting important opportunities for Koizumi to leverage his popularity through leader visits.

To statistically minded readers, model 1's finding that Koizumi's visits reduced the vote shares of LDP candidates at low levels of *Koizumi popularity* may trigger concerns about endogeneity bias. As covered in the previous section on strategic resource allocation, the locations of Koizumi's visits are predicated

on assumptions about their effects. Koizumi was more likely to visit districts where his presence would generate the highest marginal benefit—that is, where the predicted margin of victory was the smallest. Accordingly, the causal arrow between Koizumi's visits and the 2005 election outcome could theoretically go in either direction, resulting in a biased coefficient from the OLS model. In formal terms, the primary concern is that the *Koizumi visit* variable is correlated with the error term. Standard endogeneity tests show, however, that this is not the case, suggesting that the OLS model used here is appropriate.¹⁶

One caveat to note here is that it is difficult to assess the true effects of Koizumi's visits, because *Koizumi popularity*—the key variable driving the preceding results—is a combination of the support ratings for Koizumi and the LDP, which are not theoretically independent values. Some die-hard LDP partisans reflexively support Koizumi because he is the leader of their party, while a different subset of Koizumi fans support the LDP only because of their affection for the politician. If there are more intrinsic Koizumi supporters than intrinsic LDP supporters in reality, then our measure underestimates the length of Koizumi's coattails. If the opposite holds true and Koizumi supporters are LDP supporters first, then the *Koizumi popularity* variable overestimates the coattail effects. I am inclined to believe the first interpretation—that affection for Koizumi drew people to the LDP—over the second, because Koizumi's support rating was 7 to 11 percent higher than the LDP's in almost every district. Thus, the statistical findings most likely *underestimate* the true magnitude of Koizumi's coattails and how they paved the way for the LDP's stunning electoral victory in 2005.

Conclusion

Observers of European elections have noted the increasing “presidentialization” of parliamentary politics for close to two decades. The media focus on party leaders is unsurprising in presidential systems, where the chief executive (and putative party leader) competes in an election separate from that of the legislature. Parliamentary elections, in contrast, have traditionally been the preserve of the party collective. Yet a host of high-profile party leaders have emerged over the last twenty years—Margaret Thatcher and Tony Blair in the United Kingdom being notable examples. This suggests that charisma may be as important a criterion in picking party leaders as the traditional metrics of policy expertise, seniority, and the ability to forge internal consensus.

Japanese elections have historically been about more than party affiliation, since individual candidate characteristics and the personal vote have been at least as valuable as partisanship (Curtis 1971; Ramseyer and Rosenbluth 1993). If anything, the combination of a parliamentary system and personalistic politics should predispose Japanese elections against the measurable coattail effects of a party leader. This chapter's analysis challenges this view, as Prime Minister Koizumi produced an electoral windfall for his party's candidates by

virtue of his overall popularity and the targeted, associational effects of his campaign visits.

In the months after the September 2005 election, Koizumi succeeded in leveraging his electoral coattails for legislative authority. The election left the LDP-Komeito coalition with more than two-thirds of Lower House seats—more than any government had held in the postwar period—and the postal-privatization plan was voted through the Diet with a large supermajority. Importantly, the government had enough seats to enact legislative motions for constitutional amendments, subject to approval in a national referendum. This intensified debates about Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution, which forbids the nation from having a military with offensive-use capabilities. The LDP circulated its proposed draft for a new constitution publicly, and while no changes seem to be forthcoming in the near future, the change in status of the Japan Defense Agency to the Ministry of Defense suggests a more aggressive security posture in the future.

What I do not address here—although it deserves serious analysis in the future—is whether Koizumi's 2005 coattails are unique in Japanese politics. There have been other popular prime ministers in the past, such as Yasuhiro Nakasone in the 1980s and Ryutaro Hashimoto in the mid-1990s, whose campaign visits may have generated an equal or larger electoral benefit. In fact, the effect of leader visits may have been higher when TV news was less dominant, because the novelty of seeing and hearing a party boss was greater.

At the same time, the 2005 election was marked by intense competition among conservative candidates divided by their positions on postal privatization. The opposition parties, particularly the DPJ, were marginalized in the campaign discourse because of the media's extensive coverage of the assassin districts. Given the electoral context, it is not surprising that Okada failed to generate coattails for DPJ candidates, but it is equally unlikely that intra-LDP conflict will continue to upstage the policy positions and stature of opposition party leaders.

Indeed, the size of leader coattails appears to depend on time and context. In the 2004 Upper House elections, Okada—who had just been selected DPJ president—succeeded in rallying voters as the new face of the opposition. In contrast, Shinzo Abe, who followed Koizumi as LDP president and was widely hailed for his populist appeal, led the party during the disastrous 2007 Upper House elections, when the LDP lost its legislative plurality in the Upper House for the first time in its history. Abe was plagued by popular distrust due to his decision to readmit many postal rebels who had beaten Koizumi's assassins, as well as by new revelations that the government had lost millions of pension records. The lesson, perhaps, is that while a popular leader can generate electoral coattails, his or her popularity itself is ephemeral, subject to political maneuvering and unforeseen events.

Notes

¹ Many thanks to Geoff Lorenz for help in gathering the survey data used in this paper.

² An important caveat is that the new electoral system allows losing SMD candidates to gain a second life as PR “zombies.” Candidates can be listed in both SMD and PR tiers, and the tiebreaker for candidates with the same ranking in the PR tier is their *sekibairitsu*, or their proportion of votes relative to the SMD winner. For more details, see McKean and Scheiner (2000).

³ The LDP and Komeito do not coordinate completely in all districts. While both sides avoid nominating candidates in the same district, formal cooperation in the form of vote bartering (for example, voting LDP in SMDs, voting Komeito in PR districts) is left to each party's district headquarters.

⁴ The expenditure limit in each district in 2005 equaled 19.1 million yen (baseline) plus 15 yen per registered voter. There are also detailed rules about how much candidates can spend on specific items. For example, administrative staff members cannot be paid more than 10,000 yen a day, while food costs are capped at 3,000 yen per person per day.

⁵ In practice, the parameters of what constitutes illegal online activities are vague. The POEL enumerates the various mediums that candidates and parties are permitted to use. Because the Internet is not mentioned in the POEL, electoral appeals on Web pages during the campaign period could be interpreted as illegal. While the DPJ argued that the original complaint—the illegality of uploading Okada's first speech after the campaign period started—did not constitute vote canvassing, the LDP, which has generally been lukewarm about electronic media, countered that because voters cast ballots for individual parties in the PR tier, even a collective endorsement of parties was illegal.

⁶ Okada's visit data was gathered from his personal Web site, <http://www.katsuya.net/report/2005/09/>, where visit locations were listed *after* the election ended.

⁷ On numerous occasions, Koizumi or Okada visited one particular electoral district and was joined not only by that district's home candidate but also by the candidates of neighboring districts. This was more likely in urban areas, where the party leader gave speeches in front of major train stations. I have coded these joint campaign stops as visits to all participating candidates, not just the home candidate. Voters in urban areas cross multiple electoral jurisdictions over the course of the day, particularly to and from work. The potential audience of a speech at Shibuya Station in Tokyo, for example, is not just the residents of Tokyo District 7, but some subset of the 2.4 million commuters who go through Shibuya daily.

⁸ The Communist Party has traditionally been nonstrategic with respect to candidate nominations, running one candidate in each electoral district regardless of the candidate's prospects. The average vote share of a Japan Communist Party (JCP) candidate in 2005 was 2.2 percent.

⁹ An important caveat is that party leaders *did* visit electoral districts prior to the beginning of the official campaign period. After the Lower House was dissolved on August 8, party leaders gave policy speeches in front of train stations, department stores, and other commuter hubs. These visits were occasionally accompanied by potential candidates in the next election, but did *not* involve endorsements of these candidates (which would have been illegal under the POEL). Lacking systematic data on these earlier visits, I instead count stops only during the official campaign period.

¹⁰ The omission of candidate names is based on requirements of the POEL, which stipulates that newspapers must remain neutral in their coverage of election news. In practice, this means that newspapers will write down the names of candidates only when all the candidates are included in the article.

¹¹ There is a small possibility of data contamination in this survey. Because the survey responses were collected over August 31 and September 2—*after* the actual campaign period had started—some respondents may have seen one of the party leaders and changed their opinions before they answered the survey. But since the *Asahi* poll had an average of four hundred responses per electoral district (between one hundred and eight hundred per prefecture), I expect the number of respondents who may have seen the party leaders to be a relatively small proportion of the sample, and hence inconsequential in the final analysis.

¹² The *Asahi Shimbun* did not report responses to the first question (Koizumi versus Okada) for 11 out of 47 prefectures. Here, I used Stata 9's *impute* function to fill in the gaps. *Impute* uses an OLS regression to estimate the predicted value of the missing data. The independent variables used here include (1) prefectural approval/disapproval rates of the cabinet, as reported by the *Yomiuri Shimbun* (June 9, 2005); (2) prefectural support rates for the LDP and DPJ (question 2 in the *Asahi* survey); and (3) the proportion of voters with no party attachment (also from the *Asahi* survey). For each party leader, the imputation regression took the following form:

$$Koizumi = b_0 + b_1(\text{cabinet approval}) + b_2(\text{LDP support}) + b_3(\text{no party preference}) + \text{error}$$

$$Okada = b_0 + b_1(\text{cabinet disapproval}) + b_2(\text{DPJ support}) + b_3(\text{no party preference}) + \text{error}$$

¹³ Replacing 2003 *margin* with similar measures of past performance—difference in vote share between the conservative and progressive candidate, or the average margin of victory over the last two elections—produced no statistically significant differences.

¹⁴ I experimented with various operationalizations—such as whether the district housed the main train station of that prefecture, whether the prefectural capital was located in that district, and the level of population density—but none was statistically or substantively significant.

¹⁵ Predicted probabilities are generated using the Clarify program in the Stata statistics package (King, Tomz, and Wittenberg 2000). I initially explored using event count data (number of times each district was visited) and a zero-inflated negative binomial regression, instead of the logistic regression. However, because the number of double visits by each leader was small relative to the sample (1 for Koizumi and 12 for Okada), I believe that a dichotomous dependent variable is more appropriate.

¹⁶ I first test for endogeneity by rerunning model 1, table 7.3, and including the residuals from model 1A, table 7.2, as an additional independent variable. If the residual term is statistically significant, then we cannot discount endogeneity bias. But I find that this variable is not significant at conventional levels, suggesting that the OLS model is appropriate. In cases of endogeneity bias, the standard approach is to use a Heckman selection model or some related treatment effects model that analyzes the effect of an endogenously chosen binary outcome on another endogenous continuous variable. This method requires us to simultaneously estimate two models: (1) a probit model to predict the location of Koizumi's visits, using the independent variables from table 7.2, and (2) a linear regression that includes the predicted probabilities of the visit from (1) to measure LDP vote share. I test this possibility using Stata 9's "treatreg" function with two-step consistent estimators, as well as a Heckman selection model (Stata 9's "heckman"). I find that the results of the treatment effects and selection models are not statistically different from the OLS used in this chapter. More formally, the correlation of the error terms of the two stages (*rho*) is not statistically significant at conventional levels.

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Appendix 7.A Descriptive Statistics for Tables 7.2 and 7.3

Continuous variables	Mean	Standard deviation	Min., max.
<i>Distance_log</i>	5.153	1.751	0, 7.575
<i>Distance_sq</i>	29.605	13.938	0, 57.375
<i>Koizumi popularity</i>	9.812	2.849	3, 15
<i>Okada popularity</i>	8.467	1.411	4, 12
<i>No party preference</i>	43.527	1.729	40, 48
<i>2003 margin</i>	0.158	0.147	0.002, 0.791
<i>Vote share (2005)</i>	0.310	0.190	0.022, 0.736
<i>Candidate/district</i>	3.329	0.627	2, 6
Dichotomous variables	Total	LDP + Komeito	DPJ
<i>SMD incumbent</i>	286	144	104
<i>PR zombie</i>	114	39	62
<i>New</i>	264	63	55
<i>Assassin districts</i>	33		