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Who Should Govern: The Political Reformation after the First World War in Japan¹

Ryota Murai²

In modern Japan, the Meiji Constitution created a bicameral Imperial Diet, which included a House of Representatives with members chosen by direct election. However, this was not what made the party cabinet system a necessity. Rather, it was because the Meiji Constitutional system was a multiple union of many organs, such as the Privy Council and the House of Peers. The House of Representatives was also one of them. The selection of the prime minister was not based on the intentions of the House of Representatives, but rather on the elder statesmen (*genro*)'s consensus directed by protocol.

Nevertheless, under the slogans like “Protecting the Constitutional Government (*Kensei-Yogo*)” or “The Normal way of the Constitutional Government (*Kensei-Jodo*),” the situation slowly changed. The politics that made the House of Representatives and political parties an axis became the undercurrent that was hard to suppress. During the final stages of the First World War, Takashi Hara, the leader of the *Seiyukai*, the majority party of the House of Representatives, formed his own cabinet; and over a span of eight years, from 1924 to 1932, this was the time when the party leader possessed political power. The period is known as the “period of party cabinets.”³ The period is a very important one for modern Japan. The political foundation of the period was based on domestic party politics and the foreign policy of international cooperation within the Washington Conference framework. From 1927, there was a two-party system by the *Seiyukai* and the *Minseito*. It was the heyday of party politics in modern Japan.

Why was Japan alternatively governed by party cabinets from 1924 to 1932? Why were party cabinets born in succession despite the restraints of the Meiji Constitution? Earlier studies, however, seem not to provide a sufficient explanation about the reason for the succession. One prominent

1. This is an expanded and revised version of the paper presented at the Annual Study Conference of the Japanese Political Science Association, October 7, 2000 and at the research seminar of the Edwin O. Reischauer Institute of Japanese Studies, Harvard University, February 16, 2001. Thanks are due to the organizers and participants for their valuable comments and criticisms.

2. Research Fellow of Japan Society for the Promotion of Science. Ph. D (Political Science), Kobe University, 2001. This research was supported in part by a grant from Japan Society for the Promotion of Science.

3. Taichiro Mitani, “The Establishment of Party Cabinets, 1898-1932” Peter Duus ed. *The Cambridge History of Japan*, vol.6, Cambridge University Press, 1988, p.55.

scholar claims that there was no special meaning at all in the succession of the party cabinet.⁴ The claim is that succession of party cabinets was merely the accumulation of accommodating the situation of the time. Still other scholars claim that there was some reason as to why the Japanese system continued to choose the leader of a political party as a prime minister.⁵ There is still no agreement to this day.

The author believes that there are two problems in the background of this debate. The first problem is time. The “period of party cabinets” is for a mere eight years. After which a non-party cabinet was formed from 1932. Is this not too short in order to argue about formation of a certain system? The second and more serious problem is about the leadership of Kinmochi Saionji, the elder statesman who influenced the selection of prime ministers in the 1920s.

Saionji had advised the emperor about the next prime minister candidate in the “period of party cabinets.” In this period, his advice was always adopted. In other words, he was the person who kept selecting the leader of political parties as a prime minister from 1924 to 1931. However, he also selected an individual that was not a political party leader in 1932. Did he find any meaning in the succession of the party cabinet? Or, was it the mere accumulation of his judgment of each and every situation? Most scholars admit the importance of his leadership, but there is a serious dispute over his true intentions.

In this article, I place particular emphasis on the selection of the prime minister. This is because the succession of party cabinets is the results of selections. But if we study only the results, it is not enough. There are too few cases examine as a sample. Therefore we need to extend the observation to the form of selection and the logic behind the decision. The results of the selections were closely influenced by which form to choose. And it is also important why the prime ministers were selected in the first place. Was there any rule to the selection process? Or, was there any “system” to select the successive party cabinets?

The purpose of this article is to show the process that created the party cabinet system in modern Japan, paying attention to the interaction among the side selecting the prime minister, the elder statesmen and the

4. Yoshitake Oka, “*Taisho Democracy no Kitei*,” [Foundations of the *Taisho Democracy*.] Sekai, 1970, No.171. Oka, *Tenkanki no Taisho*, [The Taisho Era as the Period of Transition.] Tokyo University Press, 1969. Junnosuke Masumi, *Nihon Seito Shiron*, [Essays on History of the Japanese Political Parties.] vol. 5, Tokyo University Press. 1969. Kentaro Awaya, *Shouwa no Seito*, [Political Parties in the Showa Era.] Shogakukan, 1988. Connors, Lesley, *The Emperor's Adviser: Saionji Kinmochi and pre-war Japanese Politics*, London: Croom Helm, 1987, p.106. Nobuo Tsuchikawa, “*Seito Naikaku to Genro Saionji Kinmochi*,” [Party-Cabinets and the Elder Statesman Kinmochi Saionji.] *Nenpo Kindai Nihon Kenkyu*, vol.20, Yamakawa-shuppan, 1998, pp.83-4.

5. Yukio Ito, *Taisho Democracy to Seito Seiji*, [The *Taisho Democracy* and the Party Politics.] Yamakawa-shuppan, 1987, pp. 212-3. Kazu Nagai, “*Saionji Kinmochi wa Ikanisite Saigono Genro to nattanoka*,” [How did Kinmochi Saionji become the Last *Genro*?] *Kyoto Daigaku Bungakubu Kiyo*, no.36,1997.

Imperial Court bureaucrats, and the side being chosen, the political party powers. Hence, we must comprehensively examine a change in rule whether who should be elected. By this examination, I will illuminate the process by which Japan faced the world after the First World War and what changes were brought about.

1. Japan at the Crossroads

Since the Meiji Restoration in 1868, Japan had secured foreign independence and domestic development under the leadership of the strong government called “*Hanbatsu-Seifu*.” And, after the First World War, Japan became one of Five Powers in the League of Nations. The war was also an epoch-making event economically. The war transformed Japan from a debtor nation into a creditor nation.⁶ It was a proud moment. And it was a world-historic success story of modernization. But at the same time, Japan stood at the crossroads. The famous journalist Iichiro Tokutomi sounded the alarm in his book named *Japan and the World after the Great War*: “Now, Japan stands at the crossroads.”⁷

There were three kinds of problems. The first two were policy problems related to the rapid change of the internal and external environments surrounding Japan. First, on diplomatic policy, there was anxiety toward international isolation, despite the fact that Japan won the war as one of the Allied countries. Japanese diplomatic foundation had been on the Anglo-Japanese alliance since 1904. And the agreement with the Russian Empire had complemented Japanese national security since 1907. But the Russian Revolution caused the fall of the Russian Empire in 1917. Moreover, Japanese foreign policy during the war instilled fear in Great Britain and the United States as a new power in the postwar world. It was in this light that the “21 Demands,” and “Siberia Expedition” were perceived. In addition, the difficult relations with China remained. Japan needed to recover its international reputation after the war.

Secondly, on domestic policy, Japan was pressed by the need to adapt to the new situation. It was the social popularization under drastic social change.⁸ There were many riots, like rice riots and labor disputes. Hence, social policies, such as the adjustment of the price of rice and labor policies were necessary.

Finally, the most tedious but nevertheless grave problem resided in the political system itself. Japanese politics had become gradually sensitive

6. Juro Hashimoto and Yuko Osugi, *Kindai Nihon Keizai-shi*, [The Modern Japanese Economic History.] Iwanami Shoten, 2000, p.225.

7. Iichiro Tokutomi, *Taisengo no Sekai to Nihon*, [The World and Japan after the First World War!] Minyu-sha, 1920, p.2.

8. Mitsusada Inoue, Keiji Nagahara and other ed., *Nihon Rekishi Taikei*, [An Outline of the Japanese Economic History.] vol.16, pp.59-63.

to the political consciousness of the people. In turn this led to the growth of personal values and the decline of the national values.⁹ The authoritarian government had enabled Japan to secure the national security and prosperity for the most part. But that character of the government had become the object of general the criticism.¹⁰ Sakuzo Yoshino, the political scholar, demanded more democratic politics by using his word “*Minhon-shugi*” politics. He explained the politics, “An assembly supervises government which deals with the situation, and the people supervise the assembly.”¹¹ He exclaimed that public opinion is the ultimate authority in the “*Minhon-shugi*” politics.¹² And according to his argument, the “*Minhon-shugi*” was the result of the natural outflow the current constitutional government, while it was also clear that it was the fundamental aim of the constitutional government.¹³ Many of his contemporaries supported this argument.¹⁴

The importance of the period also influenced the system. 1918 marked fifty years from the Meiji Restoration in 1868; and 1919 marked the thirtieth year since the Meiji Constitution promulgation in 1889. As time passed, unexpected problems naturally surfaced. By the early 20th century, there were many systematic problems within the Meiji Constitutional System.

The problem of the replacing the generation was one of the most serious one. The elder statesmen who participated in the Meiji Restoration and built the Meiji Constitutional System passed away one after another.¹⁵ The elder statesmen were existences beyond the Meiji Constitution. They were existences that originated in the individual ability and the experience mainly in the Meiji era. And the qualification of them was just personal. Nevertheless, important roles of the Meiji Constitutional System were still left to them.

Three roles were still left for the elder statesmen. The first role was as an *advisor* to the emperor regarding serious issues related to Japan, such as cases involving the war and international diplomacy.¹⁶ This advice

9. The tendency and its spilit of the age are called “*Taisho Democracy*.” On this theme, see, Keiichi Eguchi and other ed., *Symposium Nihon Rekishi*, [A Symposium about the Japanese History.] vol. 20, Gakusei-sha, 1969.

10. About after the Russo-Japanese war, the tendency became more remarkable. See Taichiro Mitani, *Sinhan Taisho Democracy Ron*, [Essays about the *Taisho Democracy*: new edition.] Tokyo University Press, 1995.

11. Sakuzo Yoshino, “Minhon-shugi no Igi wo Toite, Futatabi Kensei-Yushu no Bi wo Nasu no Michi wo Ronzu,” [The second Argument about the Road to Complete the Constitutional Politics by Explaining the Significance of Mihon-shugi.] *Chuo-Koron*, January 1918, p.124.

12. *Ibid.*

13. *Ibid.*, p.129.

14. Contrary to Yoshino’s argument, Shinkichi Uesugi’s argument was more nationalistic and did not need to be backed. See Junji Banno, *Democracy in Pre-War Japan*, Routledge, London, 2001.

15. For further details of the elder statesmen (*genro*), see, Yukio Ito, “*Genro no Keisei to Hensen nikansuru Jyakkon no Kosatsu*,” [A Study about the Formation and Development of the Elder Statesmen.] *Shirin*, Vol. 60, No. 2, 1977 and Shiro Yamamoto, *Genro*, Seizan-sha, 1986.

16. For example, it was when Japan entered the First World War.

became the basis of the emperor's actions. And, in similar situations, the elder statesmen also played important roles as the *mediators* of the various organs of the Meiji Constitutional System. This was the second role delegated to them. They used their leadership to exclude the sectionalism of organs and realize a general profit. They publicly and privately advised and acted. And the third role was as *selector* of the next prime minister. Hence, if some measure to the fading out of that generation was not taken, the Meiji Constitutional System spiraled into a crisis. This problem damaged the stability of the system.

The trial that institutionalized their individual roles in the Meiji Constitutional System had been done. The prime minister's position had been improving as a mediator of the various organs of the Meiji Constitution after the Russo-Japanese War.¹⁷ And if the emperor needed advice, he could trust the reinforced prime minister, the competent minister, or the Imperial Court bureaucrats. He could also ask the Privy Council for the advice.¹⁸ Thus, the most serious problem was the selection of the prime minister.¹⁹

The Meiji Constitution stipulated that the emperor nominate the prime minister, but this did not mean that the emperor was given a freehand to select the next prime minister, since there was a rule that the emperor cannot take any responsibility for the selection. Thus, the emperor's advisor actually appointed the prime minister.²⁰ However, it was not clear in the Meiji Constitution as to who should act as the advisor. Only custom dictated the elder statesmen should be the advisors. (Figure 1 demonstrates the usual way of selecting a prime minister in this era.)

There were three problems in the traditional method of selecting the prime minister after the First World War. The first and foremost problem was the unstableness of the aforementioned system. If all the elder statesmen were to tragically perish, who then would select the prime minister? Thus it was urgent that a new system of selection was created before the last elder statesmen passes away.

The second problem was the problem of malfunction. The elder statesmen were actually leaders in charge of the various fields before, so the agreement between them was very meaningful. But as the separation of the elder statesmen and the actual leaders progressed, the influence of the agreement on the actual policies declined. The prime minister candidate whom they chose might reject the reorganization of a cabinet.²¹ And

17. Yukio Ito, "Yamagatakei Kanryobatu to Tenno Genro Kyuchu," [Yamagata Bureaucrats group, the Emperor, the Elder Statesmen, and the Imperial Court.] *Hogakuronso*, Vol.40, No.1-2, 1996.

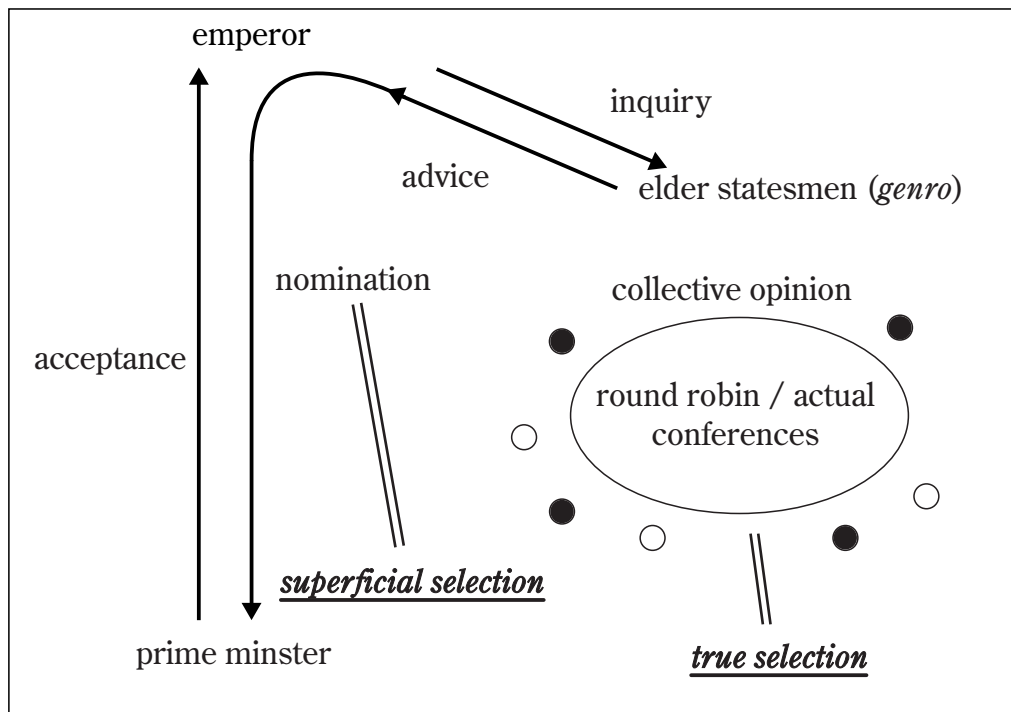
18. It was the most official way under the Meiji Constitution.

19. See Ryota Murai, "Tenkanki niokeru Shusyo Sentei," [The Selection of Prime Ministers in the Period of Transition: The Evolution of Japanese Politics, 1918-1924.] *Rokkodai Ronsyu*, Vol. 45, No. 1, 1998, pp. 83-131, for a full account of this subject.

20. The elder statesmen had the effort of unifying advice so that the emperor might not need to choose. It was called "*Genro Kaigi* (elder statesmen's meeting)."

21. For example, Iesato Tokugawa in 1915.

Figure 1: Prime minister selection based on *Genro* politics



The emperor nominated the prime minister according to Article 10 of the Meiji Constitution.

However the emperor did not have a free hand. He was required to need the advice of the elder statesmen according to the official interpretation of Article 3. Therefore, the emperor's nomination did not necessarily equate to a final selection.

The emperor's advisors were elder statesmen who were referred to "*genro*" according to custom. They held a round robin or an actual conference to discuss their various options. Their basic criterion for selection of the next prime minister was based upon personal ability. Their collective consensus was in essence the true selection.

In some circumstances, the elder statesmen appointed a statesman as an advisor to the emperor. But even in this case, the elder statesmen held the final authority in nominating the next prime minister.

sometimes, the prime minister candidate whom they chose could not form his cabinet resigned after a brief time.²² Takashi Hara wrote in his diary, “The worth of the elder statesmen has greatly declined.”²³

The last problem regards the declining legitimacy of values. As the values changed, criticism against the elder statesmen’s prime minister selection system increased.²⁴ It was closely related to the problem of who should govern. It was the thought that the person who should govern was not the individual they chose, but the man whose legitimacy was based on the people’s will.

Hence some improvement was inevitable in the way the prime minister was selected. There were five choices in the beginning of the 1920s. The first choice was the filling up the elder statesmen from the new generations. If the elder statesmen could be replaced before they all disappeared, the traditional method could be continued, though functionality and legitimacy problems would still persist. The second choice was the way in which the former prime ministers would advise the next prime minister. There were several cases where the prime minister was selected by the outgoing prime minister.²⁵ But that was an exception to the normal custom. The third choice was to submit the decision to the Privy Council. The Privy Council was placed in the Meiji Constitution as the emperor’s consultative body. The fourth choice was the reorganization of the elder statesmen’s conference. It would not fill up the elder statesmen in the usual meaning, but make the some post person, for example the chairman of the Privy Council, the selector. The fifth choice was to ask the Keeper of the Privy Seal for advice. The Privy Seal was designated as the emperor’s multipurpose advisor. There were merits and demerits (See Table 1), and it should be choiced in the actual political process.

2. Political-reform process 1: the Change Movements from Below

i . The *Seiyukai* Cabinets

The first Cabinet that faced the postwar era was the Takashi Hara Cabinet. The Hara Cabinet seemed suitable to the new feature of the era. Hara was

22. Keigo Kiyoura could not form his cabinet and Taro Katsura who was chosen next resigned in about a month. Then the elder statesmen’s meetings were held eleven times.

23. Takashi Hara, *Hara Kei Nikki*, [Kei Hara Diary.] vol.3, Fukutake-shuppan, 1965, p.273. I will use the term “*Hara Diary*” to refer to this book.

24. In 1923, Sennosuke Yokota, the party politician, said that the Privy Council would be the selector in the future (“*Dainiji Goken Undo Shi*” [The History of the Second Movement for the Defence of the Constitutional Politics.] Katsutaro Yokoyama ed., *Kenseikaishi*, [History of *Kenseikai*] *Kenseikai-shi Hensansho*, 1926, p.6).

25. The *Kei-En* period was a good example.

Table 1: Five choices of the alternative prime minister selection method

choices	Inquiry to the reorganized elder statesman meeting (<i>Genro-Kyogi</i>)	Inquiry to the retiring prime minister	submitting the problem to the Privy Council
contents	To add other statesmen to the elder statesmen group and maintain the traditional custom.	The retiring prime minister advises the emperor about the next prime minister.	Privy Council answers the inquiry from the emperor about the next prime minister.
authority	Based on custom	Prime minister advises the emperor about state affairs according to Article 55 of the Meiji Constitution.	Privy Council answers the inquiry from the emperor about important state affairs according to Article 56 of the Meiji Constitution.
merits	Will solve the problem of the institutional instability and the fear of the sudden collapse of the traditional system.	Will solve the problem of the institutional instability. Also, it will be expected to be founded on party politics and to solve the functionality and legitimacy.	Is the most legitimate advisory body for the emperor under Meiji Constitution.
problems	Lack of legitimacy and functionality.	the fear for the partisan politics.	Criticizes against the Privy Council as an conservative institution.

choices	Inquiry at post keeper's meeting (<i>Jyushin-Kyogi</i>)	Inquiry to the Privy Seal
contents	someone who is a keeper of the specific post, for example, a chairman of the Privy Council, a former prime minister, and chairmen of the Diet fills the usual role of the elder statesmen.	Privy Seal advises the emperor about the prime minister selection.
authority	Continuation of the usual custom, <i>Genro-Kyogi</i> .	Privy Seal advises the emperor generally according to the bureaucratic rules, <i>Naidaijin-Kansei</i> .
merits	More institutionalized and legitimate.	Unaffected by partisan politics and will be expected to avoid the maneuvers relating to the selection.
problems	Support of public opinion.	Privy Seal's political activities were severely criticized. And if he possesses the political power on the selection, the maneuvers for the post would occur.

the first prime minister who was a true political party statesman.²⁶ He chose most of his cabinet members from his party, *Seiyukai*. Hence the Hara Cabinet was called the “first true party cabinet.”²⁷

Hara wanted to reform the Meiji Constitutional System to adapt to the new conditions. In his administration, the election system was reformed. He abolished the county system and founded the jury system. On diplomacy, he opened the way to international cooperation within the Washington Conference framework before his untimely death.²⁸ At the same time, Hara endeavored to improve the political status of party powers in the Meiji Constitutional System. He was the first civilian to become the deputy of the Navy Minister. He managed the task after the First World War very well. His administration lasted more than two years. He brought stability to postwar Japan in a brief time and greatly contributed to the development of party politics.

The Hara Cabinet, however, was formed after denying the idea of the party cabinet system in two meanings. Until then, prime ministers had been selected through discussions among the elder statesmen. When the Hara Cabinet materialized every elder statesmen who selected Hara as prime minister was against the system. Far from the party cabinet system, even Aritomo Yamagata opposed to the party cabinet.²⁹ And even Saionji, who had a comparative understanding of party politics, used fear of the party cabinet system to persuade Yamagata.³⁰ The selectors relied on Hara’s individual ability.³¹ Hara was the politician whom the elder statesmen expected to bring balance on the plural organs of the Meiji Constitution into the current conditions after the First World War.³²

Hara did not desire the change of power between political parties. It seems that Hara considered administration reform, but not with the *Kenseikai*, the second party of the House of Representatives. Instead he consulted with the *Kenkyukai*, the majority party of the House of Peers.

26. Hirofumi Ito, Shigenobu Okuma, and Kinmochi Saionji were the top of the parties when they were the Prime Minister. But they all had a career as the Meiji Restoration Bureaucrat. So, Hara was the first genuine party leader prime minister.

27. According to the party organ, *Seiyu*, there were many parties in celebration of the formation of the first genuine party cabinet (*Seiyu*, 256).

28. For further details of the Hara Diplomacy, see, Taichiro Mitani, *Zouho Nihon Seito Seiji no Keisei*, [The Formation of the Japanese Party Politics: an enlarged edition.] Tokyo University Press, 1995 and Ryuji Hattori, *Higashi Asia Kokusai Kankyo no Hendo to Nihon Gaiko*, [The Japanese Diplomacy and the changes of the East Asian International Environment.] Yuhikaku, 2001.

29. When Korekiyo Takahashi was selected as the prime minister after Hara’s assassination, Yamagata gave his impression to Saionji: “It is the succession of the thief’s cabinets”. Yoshitake Oka and Shigeru Hayashi revise, *Taishyo Democracy ki no Seiji*, [Politics of the *Taisho Democracy* Era: The Gokichi Matsumoto Diary.] Iwanami shoten, 1959, p.127. I will use the term “*Matsumoto Dialect*” to refer to this book.

30. *Hara Diary*, vol.5, p.13.

31. See Minoru Kawata, *Hara Takashi to Yamagata Aritomo*, [Takashi Hara and Arimoto Yamagata.] Chuo Koron Sha, 1998 and Samon Kinbara, *Taishyo ki no Seito to Kokumin*, [The Political Parties and the Nation in the Taisho Era.] Koshobou, 1973.

32. Mitani (1995), *op.cit.*, p.16.

Hara said, “Administration alternation with the *Seiyukai*, which is the majority party of the House of Representatives, and the *Kenkyukai* which is the first party of the House of Peers, is a constitutional government’s regular course in Japan.”³³ The ruling party, *Seiyukai*, was of the same thought.³⁴ At this time, there was an agreement that denied the party cabinet system between the chosen sides as to which side to choose. Therefore, it can be said that it was an expected result that the political party cabinet was not organized following the Korekiyo Takahashi Cabinet. The two *Seiyukai* Cabinets were definitely party cabinets, but they were not cabinets based on the party cabinet system.

The Hara Cabinet and its successor, the Takahashi Cabinet, however, became the original accumulation process of the party cabinet system for two reasons. Firstly, the formation of the Hara Cabinet and the protraction of political power for more than two years proved the party cabinet’s capability to govern.³⁵ And, apart from the intentions of the elder statesmen, the fact that the party cabinet was formed and succeeded by the party cabinet had a large influence on the formation of the party cabinet system.

Secondly and more importantly, the formation and deployment of the Hara Cabinet brought the result that lends power to the second party, the *Kenseikai*, to become the ruling party.

ii . The *Kenseikai* under the *Seiyukai* Cabinets

The *Kenseikai* had withstood an adverse situation for nearly ten years until coming to power in 1924. I would like to emphasize the role of the *Kenseikai* in the formation of the party cabinet system. As I said earlier, the political foundation of the “period of party cabinet” was based in the domestic party politics and international cooperation within the Washington Conference framework. It had been often said that the *Seiyukai* established this line.³⁶ However, in reality, the political parties that held the dominant position during the era of party cabinets from 1924 to 1932 were the *Kenseikai* and its successor, the *Minseito*.³⁷ Why was the *Kenseikai* able to maintain that position? It has been typically explained that the *Seiyukai*’s schism in the early 1920s, and the period of decline that followed, led to the *Kenseikai*’s rise.³⁸ But the decline of the *Seiyukai* meant a decline of all

33. Yukio Sakurauchi, *Sakurauchi Yukio Jiden*, [The Autobiography of Yukio Sakurauchi.] Soutensha, 1952, pp.99-100.

34. *Matsumoto Diary*, p.176.

35. For instance, Goro Miura, the Privy Council member, changed greatly the evaluation of the ruling ability of the political parties. See Goro Miura, *Kan'yu Shogun Kaikoroku*, [The Goro Miura Memoirs.] Chuo Koron sha, 1988.

36. Junji Banno, *Kindai Nihon no Gaiko to Seiji*, [Diplamacy and Politics in Modern Japan.] Kenbun shuppan, 1985, pp.161-3.

37. The *Kenseikai* formed five cabinets for five and a half years in this period.

38. Mitani (1995), *op.cit.*, p.17.

political parties for Saionji.³⁹ Hence, an alternative explanation is necessary to understand why the *Kenseikai* developed on its own.

Hitherto most research took the position that the *Kenseikai* changed its policy after it received an administration in 1924.⁴⁰ Even the research following the *Kenseikai*'s change earlier thought the time in the Tomosaburo Kato Cabinet.⁴¹ We, however, should not overlook the change of the *Kenseikai* under the Hara Cabinet. The *Kenseikai*'s change happened on both sides of the foreign and the domestic policy.

The road to revival of the *Kenseikai* began at the last stage of the First World War. The *Kenseikai* had adroitly adjusted to the emerging new world order. The *Kenseikai* had two distinct goals. One was domestic: reformation towards more "democratic politics," leading up to the party cabinet system. The other was international: cooperation with the "democratic powers," such as Great Britain and the United States.⁴² The *Kenseikai* emphasized the importance of the cooperation with the Powers on foreign affairs. The *Kenseikai* supported the Washington Conference framework and criticized the "Siberian Expedition." On internal affairs, the *Kenseikai* strongly argued about the realization of the party cabinet system based on a two-party system and popular suffrage on internal affairs.⁴³ These were the prototypes of its position in the late 1920s.⁴⁴

Two factors suggested a change in the *Kenseikai*. The first was the impact of the First World War. Reijiro Wakatsuki, one of the *Kenseikai* leaders, said that the cooperation oriented foreign policy was not an original Japanese policy, but the "worldwide trend" after the First World War.⁴⁵ And the second factor was the impact of the Hara Cabinet. The *Kenseikai* thought that a rule to take office changed under the Hara Cabinet. The leaders of the *Kenseikai* paid attention to the tendency that two-party system was born in the party power.⁴⁶ And they put emphasis on the part as an opposition party referring to the English opposition parties.⁴⁷ The

39. *Matsumoto Diary*, p.295.

40. Banno(1985), *op.cit.*, pp.155-67.

41. Ito(1987), *op.cit.*, pp.129-32.

42. *Kensei*, vol.2, no.1, pp.7-8.

43. Osachi Hamaguchi, one of the *Kenseikai*'s leader, said that he expected the "development of the responsible party politics based the confrontation between two big parties." Masaru Ikei, Masaru Hatano, and Fumitaka Kurosawa ed., *Hamaguchi Osachi Nikki Zuikanroku*, [The Diary Memoirs of Osachi Hamaguchi.] Misuzu shobo, 1991, p.473.

44. See Ryota Murai, "Diichiji Taisen go Sekai to Kenseikai no Koryu," [The Rise of the *Kenseikai* after World War I and the Establishment of the Party Cabinet System, 1918-25.] *Kobe Hogaku Nenpo*, no.17, 2001, for a full account of this subject.

45. Yoshihiro Hirose ed., *Seiji Danwa Sokkiroku*, [Stenographic Records about Political Talks.] vol.8, Yumani-shobo, 1999, pp.392-5.

46. The *Kenseikai*'s party organ, *Kensei*, analyzed the present condition as follows after the prefectural elections in 1919: the public tendency had gradually made the political world the confrontation tendency between the two big parties, the *Seiyukai* and the *Kenseikai* based on the public support. And neutral party and small party called the third party would get out of date (*Kensei*, vol.2, no.8, 1919, pp.7-9).

47. *Kensei*, vol.4, no.6, pp.20-1.

Kenseikai saw a vision of two parties scrambling for political power. It was not reality but a dream of the *Kenseikai* in Japan.

iii . Non-party Cabinets and the “Second Movement to Protect Constitutional Government”

After the two party cabinets, the three non-party cabinets were organized: the Tomosaburo Kato Cabinet, the second Gonnohyoe Yamamoto Cabinet and the Keigo Kiyoura Cabinet. The era was the time of groping in the dark for the party powers. And it was the same also for the non-party powers. Each was searching for a self-image after the First World War in the Meiji Constitutional System.

The three non-party cabinets had respectively different purposes and power structures. The Kato Cabinet was selected as a successor of the two *Seiyukai* cabinets. Prime Minister Kato was the Navy Minister in the two *Seiyukai* administrations. And he participated in the Washington Conference as the plenipotentiary. The leading selector in this time was Masayoshi Matsukata, one of the elder statesmen. Matsukata had two candidates in his thoughts. He selected Tomosaburo Kato as the first candidate from the standpoint of diplomacy. If the plan did not materialize, he selected Takaaki Kato as the second candidate, based on the concept of administration alternation between the political parties.⁴⁸ The *Seiyukai* surprised this policy and expressed support for Tomosaburo Kato. The *Kenseikai* was surprised at the formation of a no-party cabinet and started a movement that opposed to this cabinet.⁴⁹ But the movement did not grow at all. The Kato Cabinet fell due to the Prime Minister’s death from sickness in 1923.

The second Yamamoto Cabinet was selected as the reorganizer of the political world. The leading selector was Saionji. He expected Yamamoto to enforce the general election and to cure the party powers.⁵⁰ Yamamoto tried to form the National Unity Government that chose ministers from all major sectors.⁵¹ This result failed to come up to the *Seiyukai*’s expectation. And the second non-party cabinet’s formation shook the *Kenseikai*.⁵² The cooperation of the two parties, the *Seiyukai* and the *Kenseikai*, privately began under this cabinet.⁵³ The second Yamamoto Cabinet fell because of not only the impact of the sniping case to the emperor but also the loss of support from party powers.

48. Nobuaki Makino, *Makino Nobuaki Nikki*, [The Nobuaki Makino Diary.] Chuo Koron sha, 1990, pp.53-4. I will use the term “*Makino Diary*” to refer to this book.

49. The movement was called, “the movement to protect constitutional government” similar to the movement of 1924.

50. *Matsumoto Diary*, p.255.

51. See Yasushi Toriumi, “*Hara Naikaku houkaigo ni okeru Kyokoku Icchi Naikaku Rosen no Tenkai to Zassetsu*,” [The Development and the Breakdown of the Governments of National Unity Policy after Collapse of the Hara Cabinet.] *Tokyo Daigaku Kyouyobu Jinbun Kagaku Kiyo*, no.54, 1972.

52. Yokoyama ed., *op.cit.*, p.499.

53. *Ibid.*, pp.3-30.

The Kiyoura Cabinet was selected as an impartial administrator of the election. The leading selector was Saionji again. Saionji expected the cabinet to enforce the general election impartially. Therefore, he gave Kiyoura concrete directions. He wanted Kiyoura to avoid the party members in his decisions for cabinet members.⁵⁴ Kiyoura followed these directions and chose his cabinet based almost entirely on members from the House of Peers. In this time, Saionji kept refusing the administration participation of the *Kenseikai* and expected that the *Seiyukai* would be regenerated through proper public election.⁵⁵

The party powers lost sight of the rule to take office. Division inside each of the political parties proceeded. Stress had gradually accumulated. And its release was at a stretch. The “Second Movement to Protect Constitutional Government” began in 1924. On the occasion of the formation of the Kiyoura Cabinet, the *Kenseikai* and the *Kakusinkurabu* expressed opposition at the early grade. And Takahashi decided to oppose the cabinet, and the *Seiyukai* was divided into two parts: the *Seiyukai* and the *Seiyuhonto*. Without the *Seiyuhonto*, the majority of the party powers started a nationwide movement in search of the formation of the party cabinet system.

Although the “Second Movement to Protect Constitutional Government” was expressed through the movement “to protect constitutional government,” the Kiyoura Cabinet was not against the Meiji Constitution. And there were many issues where the three parties were in disagreement.⁵⁶ Of course, in the background, the calculation to political power acquisition of each party was working. However, the important thing was that they did not only ask for the formation of their own cabinet, but they also submitted a new political image based on the party cabinet system to the other side of the political power scramble. That was a definite answer from the below toward the question of who should govern. The party powers argued the need of the party cabinet system from two points. They argued that the non-party cabinet was weak because it was not based on the people. They also argued that it was a national identity shown by the “Imperial Covenant of Five” in 1868. The movement called “to protect constitutional government” was the movement to create the new concept of government the Meiji Constitution.⁵⁷

54. Shoyu-club and Rentaro Nisio ed., *Mizuno Rentaro Kaiso-roku /kankei monjyo*, [The Memoirs and Documents of Rentaro Mizuno.] Yamakawa Shuppan, 1999, pp.202-3.

55. Saionji said that he would select Takahashi, the leader of the *Seiyukai*, as the prime minister if Kiyoura could not form the cabinet (*Matsumoto Diary*, p.286).

56. For instance, the *Kenseikai* was eager to reform the election system, but the *Seiyukai* was not. The *Seiyukai* was eager to reform the House of Peers, but the *Kenseikai* was not.

57. See Banno(2001), *op.cit.*

Earlier studies have evaluated the standard of whether there was people's support.⁵⁸ But the volume of the people's support is not the same with the impact to the development. In this article, I want to set a high valuation on this movement concerning its impact. The movement had three important meanings for the formation of the party cabinet system.

Firstly, in the course to the movement, a majority of the party powers came to support the idea that only party cabinets should govern. Before the movement, this was the opinion of only intellectuals, like Sakuzo Yoshino and a small number of opposition parties, like the *Kenseikai*. Of course, by the time it resulted here from the Hara and the Takahashi Cabinets, there were many complications. The *Seiyukai* supported the Tomosaburo Kato Cabinet, and the *Kenseikai* also took a neutral attitude to the second Yamamoto Cabinet. However, establishment of the party cabinet system became the central political subject for the majority in the party powers through the movement.

Secondly, the movement denied judgment of the elder statesmen and was supported extensively from people other than the party powers. The political guidance of Saionji was denied not only by the party powers but also by some establishments and journalism. Prime Minister Kiyoura who was criticized with the saying "cabinet of peers" thought a personal part to be to put a route to the party cabinet that based the result of a fair election.⁵⁹ In the beginning, public opinion was very skeptical towards this reform. This was due to a fundamental skepticism toward the party powers. But they supported the party cabinet system. Hence, when the movement began, the journalism, establishment passionately supported the movement.

Finally and most importantly, it was the *Kenseikai* Cabinet that materialized in response to the result of the general election. Originally, it was the cabinet that was not supposed to be organized so far as elder statesmen select the prime minister. The *Kenseikai* was the first party as a result of the general election in 1924. Still, Saionji did not want to select the *Kenseikai* Cabinet. So, he asked for the continuation of the Kiyoura administration when the next Diet began, hoping for a change in the situation. But Kiyoura denied Saionji's advice and resigned the body at

58. Takayoshi Matsuo evaluated the movement negatively because it did not have the broad support of public opinion (Matsuo, *Futsuu Senkyo Seido Seiritsu-shi no Kenkyu*, [Study about formation of the Popular Suffrage System.] Iwanami-shoten, 1989). Contrary to this, Yukio Ito evaluated the movement favorably because it had the broad supporting of public opinion (Ito, *Seito Seiji to Tenno*, [The Party Politics and the Emperor.] Kodan-sha, 2002, p.249).

59. Saionji had a feeling of the crisis in *Kenseikai* being the first party of the general election. He wanted Kiyoura to continue his administration and wished that conditions changed. Kiyoura, however, decided to resign (Shoyu-club and Nishio ed, *op.cit.*, pp.202-3).

once.⁶⁰ Saionji had no choices but to select Kato.⁶¹ It was an emergency solution for Saionji. The *Kenseikai* began to be adapted to postwar politics under the Hara cabinet. But a lack of trust from the elder statesmen was another problem. The result of the movement presented a chance to the *Kenseikai* to actually govern.

After the movement, party cabinets had been formed in succession for about eight years in modern Japan. The movement gave substantial impact to the Japanese politics. It was a successful movement of change orchestrated from below.

3. Political-reform process 2: the Change Movement from Above

i . Saionji and the *Kenseikai*'s revival

The formation of the first Kato Cabinet, the party cabinet after three non-party cabinets, as a result of the movements from below, however, did not mean the formation of the party cabinet system in modern Japan. It was because that the prime minister selection was left to judgment of elder statesmen even after the movement. At this time, political leadership of Saionji had a decisive meaning. Saionji had become the only one elder statesman left on July 2nd, 1924.

Then, Saionji and Privy Seal Tosuke Hirata argued about the future way to select the prime minister. They had the same opinion in the three points: (1) the elder statesmen should not be replenished, (2) Privy Seal should take part in the advisors formally in future, (3) cabinet's form would not be limited to the party cabinet (See Figure 2). Hirata said, "Japan should still go in the Japanese style.... Even if the English style is imitated, it does not work well in Japan."⁶²

For Saionji, the political situation in 1924 was felt as the critical thing. He was critical about the behavior of the political parties. And his evaluation of the political parties was lowered. He said, "After all, the time of the small party independence comes. Both a political party 15 years ago and today's political party are still the same."⁶³ Therefore, he decided to keep bearing the prime minister selection by the personal judgment with referring to the possibility of the non-party cabinets formation again.⁶⁴ But under the first Kato administration, Saionji could only watch the change of the situation for the time being.

60. Kiyoura said, "I think it is better that I resign at once on this occasion" (*Ibid.*, p.203) and "Even Kato is good for the successor" (*Matsumoto Diary*, pp.300-1).

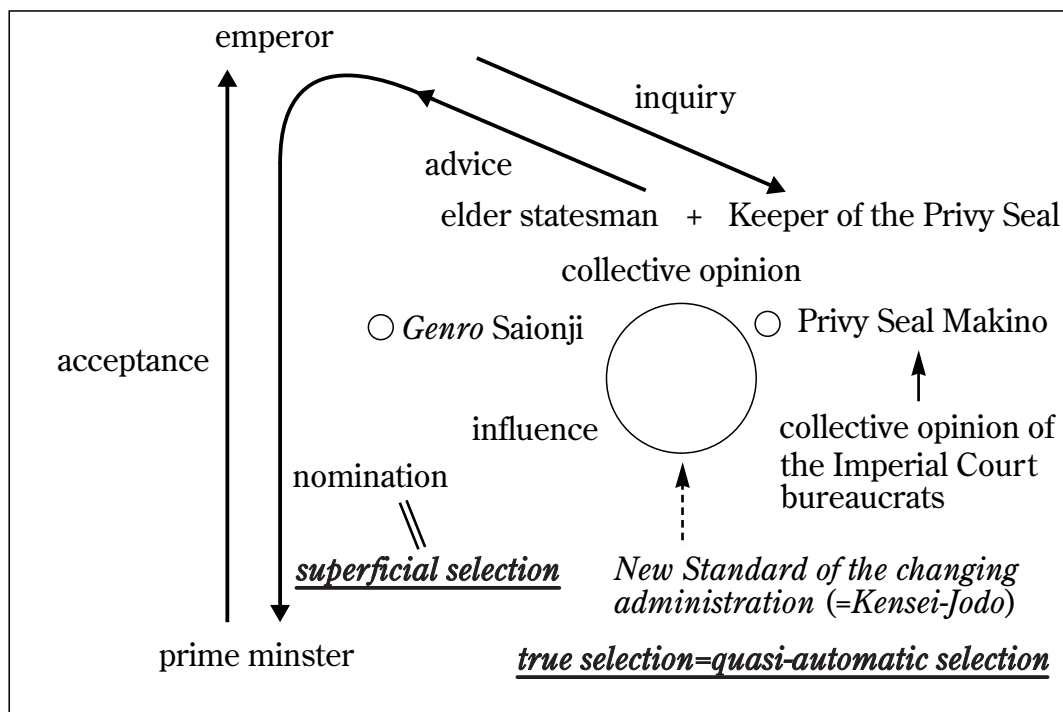
61. Imperial Household Minister Makino thought that neither the principles of the political party nor the superiority or inferiority of the prime minister candidate was a problem any more in this moment (*Makino Dairy*, p.132).

62. *Matsumoto Diary*, pp.329-30.

63. *Ibid.*, p.295.

64. *Ibid.*

Figure 2: Prime minister selection in transition



The elder statesmen gradually lost their influence as an institution as the members began to pass away. Finally, Saionji in 1924 became the last and only elder statesman. Saionji and Privy Seal Tosuke Hirata together determined not to replenish the elder statesman and add the Privy Seal as an advisor. Henceforth, the last *genro* and the Privy Seal answered the emperor's inquiry.

After Saionji's revaluation of the *Kenseikai*, he intended for a natural change of government between the political parties. He answered the emperor's inquiry based on the new standard of the changing administration that was known as "*Kensei-Jodo*," or the natural way of the constitutional government. This standard meant that the prime minister should be chosen among the political party leaders. Typically this meant that the prime minister should be the leader of the largest opposition party.

Saionji and Makino were not equal actors for the selection. Saionji wielded more authority than Makino. Thus, Makino always respected Saionji's choice.

Hence, their advice did not become the substantial selection in its true meaning. The new standard, "*Kensei-Jodo*," takes the role of the substantial selection.

On the other hand, for the *Kenseikai*, the first Kato administration is the big opportunity to exercise its talent. The first Kato administration advanced a domestic reform one after another: introduction of the popular suffrage, reformation of the House of Peers, establishing the parliamentary under secretary system. On diplomacy, Prime Minister Kato supported the international cooperation line led by the Foreign Minister Kijyuro Shidehara.

And it was August in 1925 when the opportunity of personal choice was given to Saionji again. A split tendency in the first Kato Cabinet, the coalition cabinet of three parties, had grown over the financial policy. Saionji selected Takaaki Kato as the prime minister again. Kato was selected by three reasons. Firstly, the policy of the *Kenseikai* had not lost the support of the public opinion yet. Secondly, the *Kenseikai* was still the relative majority in the political parties. Thirdly, the *Kenseikai's* act suited the constitutional way and was expected the backing of public opinion.⁶⁵ It seems very natural that he be selected. But we must not forget the Saionji's political guidance in early 1920s. Saionji had not trusted *Kenseikai* in early 1920s. His distrust was one of the causes of the political shaking in the non-party cabinet time. Hence, it is the selection that is worth nothing. And, after then, he kept choosing the party cabinets until 1931 and repeated a remark of acknowledging the party cabinet system.

To understand his change, we have to see his individual factors: his experiences and backgrounds. He was the realist who attached importance to the rationality of policies and the political stability. For example, he said that the slogan of "Normal Way of the Constitutional Government" did not make a sense and he selected the non-party cabinets in early 1920s.⁶⁶ This was the characteristic that was common to the elder statesmen in Meiji period. He considered that the inner political stability and the international cooperation are very important. He was not sticking to the form of the politics.

He, however, was not the mere realist but had the side of an idealist. He passionately wanted Japan to be the civilized country. It was because of his very unique character compared with other elder statesmen. All elder statesmen without Saionji were born in Choshu clan or Satsuma clan. Only he was born in Kyoto as a court noble. So, he had not thought of becoming the elder statesman himself.⁶⁷ He had seen the ill effects of the elder statesmen's politics with his own eyes. And he thought the elder statesman should be removed in the constitutional government.⁶⁸ He

65. "Taisho 14-nen 8-gatsu Kato dainiji naikakuseiritsu no keika," [The Development of the Formation of the Second Kato Cabinet on August 1925.] *Tsunesaburo Otsuka Documents* in the National Diet Library.

66. *Matsumoto Dairy*, p.151.

67. Saionji said to Taro Katsura that I would not become the elder statesman but you and Gonnohyoe Yamamoto will be the elder statesman someday (*Hara Diary*, vol.3, p.274).

68. Kumao Harada, *Saionji ko to Seikyoku*, [Prince Saionji and the Political Situation.] vol.2, Iwanami-shoten, pp.169-70. I will use the term "*Harada Diary*" to refer to this book.

entertained a lofty ideal what Japan should be in the long run. He gave the word “civilization” to the reference well.⁶⁹ And he thought that the political system of civilized country is a party cabinet system. He understood, as a long time view, that the complete form of the Constitutional Politics based the party cabinet system. Before, when he went to Europe with Hirofumi Ito, one of the elder statesmen, in the latter half of the 19th century, he talked with him about the two-party system in Great Britain: “It is good when it can be done like that in Japan.”⁷⁰ And in the beginning of the 20th century, when he participated in the prime minister selection for the first time as an elder statesman after the collapse of the third Taro Katsura Cabinet, Saionji asked other elder statesmen: “In the future, isn’t it decided that a majority party takes the helm of state like Britain? What do you think about it in the conditions of Japan?”⁷¹

Saionji attached importance to the condition. The most important condition he thought was not a Japanese cultural condition but a condition of a party system. Evaluation to the actual political party tied his idealism to his realism. However he desires to complete the constitutional government and to form a party cabinet system, he thought that it was impossible without a party that could apply the institution well.

Thinking of Saionji’s such character, his evaluation to the *Kenseikai* was very important for Japanese politics. Saionji chose Kato from the viewpoint of emergency evasion in 1924. He did not have other realistic choices at the time. However, Saionji was satisfied with the political management of the first Kato administration. He was satisfied with the domestic administration policy that a gradual progress plan was taken and foreign policy was based upon international cooperation. Within this administration, Saionji particularly valued Foreign Minister Shidehara.⁷² As a result, Saionji recognized the *Kenseikai* as the second ruling party following the *Seiyukai*. Once Saionji gained faith in the *Kenseikai*, he led the way in building a solid party cabinet system. After that, Saionji supported the party cabinet consistently. Saionji stated, “While I am living, I want to decide that there is no difficulty in the movement of the administration.”⁷³ Because Saionji got two and more political parties that were trustworthy, he expected the party cabinet system the political stability and the rationality of policy after.

ii . The Decisive Selection

A conclusive example that showed the Saionji’s change and his zeal to form

69. For instance, at the inaugural party of the Makoto Saito, he said, “I want you, Admiral, to do the civilized governance in Korea.”

70. Yoshimichi Hara, “*Saionjiko wo sinobu*,” *Saionjiko Tsuioku*, [Reminiscences about Prince Saionji.] Chuo University, 1942, p.314.

71. *Hara Diary*, vol.3, p.276.

72. *Matsumoto Diary*, p.447.

73. Yoshitake Oka and other ed., *Ogawa Heikichi Kankei Monjyo*, [Heikichi Ogawa Documents.] Misuzu shobo, 1973, p.613.

the party cabinet system was the selection of Giichi Tanaka in 1927. It was the decisive selection in modern Japan.

After the second Kato Cabinet falling by the prime minister's death from sickness, Saionji selected the party cabinet again. Reijiro Wakatsuki who was selected as a next prime minister was a number one politician without Kato in the *Kenseikai* that was still the first party in the House of Representatives. A custom seemed to be established little by little smoothly.

And an idea of the "Normal Way of Constitutional Government" seemed to be established, too. Sakuzo Yoshino introduced the remark of Saionji in his article named, "the Prince Saionji's argument about the elder statesmen's unnecessariness."⁷⁴ According to his article, Saionji said, "Today, the development of the political party becomes wholesome gradually and the reason why the appearance of the non-party cabinets should be necessary declined. So, the change of the cabinet organization will be natural from now on. And the advice to the emperor would be a matter of form and would not have a real meaning.... Today, it is not the time when elder statesmen should interfere in the substance of the cabinet organization. There is no problem in Privy Seal's deciding based on the standard where reason returns naturally."⁷⁵

But, under the party cabinet, the trial of establishing the party cabinet system was faced at the crossroads. There was an argument that the first Wakatsuki Cabinet should resign in a body and non-party cabinet should be formed next to enforce the fair general election. The next election would be the first universal election in modern Japan. The argument was strong in three points. Firstly, criticism to the political party arose due to the corruption case which happened one after another; the *Matsushima red-light district scandal* related to Prime Minister Wakatsuki, the *Army secret funds scandal* related to Giichi Tanaka, the leader of the second party, and others. Secondly, taking the criticism, an opponent to the party cabinet was in the prime minister selectors. Saionji heard that Privy Seal Makino seemed to opponent the Tanaka Cabinet.⁷⁶ Thirdly, if non-party cabinet would be selected, there was the party that would support the non-party cabinet, the *Seiyuhonto*.⁷⁷

In this situation, Saionji showed his intention toward the Imperial Court clearly on November 15th, 1926. Saionji pointed out three points. Firstly, the emperor should not command politics directly. Secondly, the emperor and the Imperial Court bureaucrats should make relations with the cabinet close. Thirdly, all problems should be solved by the dissolution of the Diet and the general election. Saionji said, "The any cabinet without

74. Sakuzo Yoshino, "Saionji-ko no genro muyou-ron," [Prince Saionji's Arguments that the Elder Statesmen are useless.] Chuokoron, September 1926.

75. Sakuzo Yoshino, *Furui seiji no atarashii Mikata*, [The New Way of Looking at the Old Politics.], Bunka-Seikatsu Kenkyu-Kai, 1927, pp.174-5.

76. *Matsumoto Diary*, p.542.

77. *Ibid*, p.503.

standing on the political parties or the non-party cabinet only in order to enforce the election must not be formed. And the latter was unconstitutional cabinet.”⁷⁸

After all, the dissolution of the Diet that expected by Saionji did not put in to practice because a compromise was concluded between the political parties on January 20th, 1927. The first Wakatsuki Cabinet was fallen because of the economic crisis on April 17th, 1927. The *Seiyukai* supported its leader Giichi Tanaka because the *Seiyukai* was the second party. The *Seiyuhonto* supported its leader Takejiro Tokonami with the *Kenseikai* because the majority in the House of Representatives supported him.

Saionji nominated Tanaka, the leader of the opposition party, according to plan. And the Imperial Court bureaucrats that their objection was expected supported the decision of Saionji. Then, Privy Seal Makino referred to the idea of “Normal Way of Constitutional Government.”⁷⁹ In prime minister selectors, the person who should govern was decided to be the leader of the political party based in the House of Representatives. The party cabinet system was born at this moment.

This selection taught the political world three lessons. Firstly, even if criticism against the political party was very high, it did not come into being except for the political party cabinet. Secondly, a coalition of parties was not taken into consideration. Thirdly, a rule was given priority to over the candidate’s personal problems. For the non-party powers, self-profit should be attempted under the party cabinet. For the party powers, the third party lost any meaning of existence. The party powers reacted to this selection. As a result, the *Kenseikai* combined with the *Seiyuhonto* to form the *Minseito*. Tokonami said about the reason to combine, “The public opinion in this era was not satisfied with the small party division.”⁸⁰ And Tanaka said, “In order to demonstrate the merit of constitutional government, it must be based on a party cabinet system. And, generally, the field of the political party must serve as confrontation of two large political parties.”⁸¹ By becoming the two big parties, it was thought that the strong political organization was ready. The political party systems were put in order gradually, and they contracted to the two-party system. The two-party system in modern Japan was formed at this moment.

Saionji welcomed this movement in the party powers. When the minority party seized a casting vote between the two big parties, Saionji

78. Yahachi Kawai, *Showa Syoki no Tenno to Kyuchyu*, [The Emperor and the Imperial Court in the Early Showa Era.] vol. 6, Iwanami-shoten, 1994, pp.233-4.

79. *Matsumoto Diary*, P.567. See Ryota Murai, “*Seito Naikakusei no Kanko, Sono Keisei to Saionji Kinmochi*,” [The Rise of the Party Cabinet System in Pre-World War II Japan; The Last *Genro* Saionji Kinmochi’s Political Reformation, 1924-27.] *Kobe Hogaku Zasshi*, vol.49, no.2, 1999, pp.83-5, for a full account of the Saionji’s leadership in this selection.

80. Yasaburo Kawahara, *Seiyuhonto-shi*, [History of *Seiyuhonto*.] *Seiyuhontou-shi Hensansho*, 1927, p.26.

81. *Seiyu*, no.323, pp.4-5.

gave France as an example and said that it was far better than the many small parties dividing the political world.⁸²

When Saionji became seriously ill in 1930, the emperor asked him advice about the prime minister selection in the future. He answered at this time that it might be strongly conscious of his own death and that another selector should not be filled up in the future.⁸³ Here, we notice, Saionji did not think of a new selector except for the Privy Seal to be necessary and watched a future prime minister selection in the custom that was formed gradually (See Figure 3). After the Kato Cabinets, Saionji came to speak often about his broad view of the age: "Today, it is an age for the so-called political party cabinet to be organized,"⁸⁴ and "Constitution politics has already been completed well."⁸⁵ Yuzaburo Kuratomi, chairman of the Privy Council, said about Saionji's intention: "I heard Saionji's thought was that an elder statesman would not be set up from now on, and administration alternation would be done naturally."⁸⁶ Afterward, Koichi Kido, one of the Imperial Court bureaucrats, told about Saionji's objective: "Saionji wished the administration alternation between two parties... Two parties which represents a farm village and a city if they are forced to divide take charge of an administration alternately. And he wanted to train them."⁸⁷ Saionji's political guidance based on his future plans more than the necessities in the each case.⁸⁸

Not only Saionji but also the emperor and the Imperial Court accepted the new political system then. And public opinion supported the custom, too. Privy Seal Makino wrote after the selection of Osachi Hamaguchi in 1930: "It seemed that the result has been already expected in the public opinion."⁸⁹

The process of the political reformation after the First World War got one result. The person who should govern in the new situation after the First World War was the leader of two big parties, the *Seiyukai* and the *Minseito*, based the House of Representatives reflected by the intentions of the people. The prime minister should be selected mechanically. There was no choice for the elder statesmen and the Imperial Court bureaucrats to judge personally. The postwar political regime after the First World War was born in this moment.

82. *Harada Diary*, separate volume, P.340.

83. *Makino Diary*, p.423.

84. Koichi Kido, *Kido Koichi Nikki*, [Koichi Kido Diary], Tokyo University Press, 1966, p.72. I will use the term "*Kido Diary*" to refer to this book.

85. *Harada Diary*, vol.2, p.230.

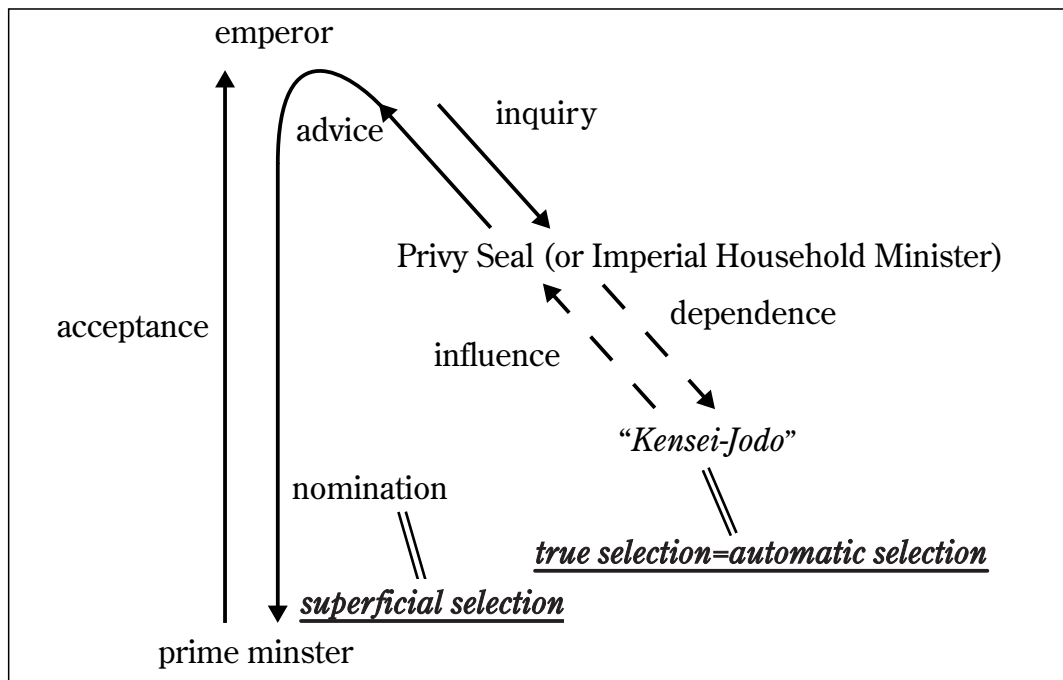
86. "*Kuratomi Yuzaburo Nikki*," [Yuzaburo Kuratomi Diary.] on July 20th, 1929, *Kuratomi Documens*, in the National Diet Library.

87. *Kido Koichi Seiji Danwa Rokuon Sokkiroku*, [Stenographic Records of Koichi Kido's Political Talks.] vol.1, p.21, in the National Diet Library.

88. See Murai (1999), *op.cit.*

89. *Makino Diary*, p.379.

Figure 3: Saionji's vision of the prime minister selection after *Genro* politics



Answering the emperor's inquiry, Saionji advised that the elder statesman should not be replenished in the future. Furthermore, on the prime minister selection, advice should only be asked of the Privy Seal. If the emperor was unable to seek the Privy Seal's advice, Saionji advised that the emperor should ask then only the Imperial Household Minister. Traditionally, the political activities of the Privy Seal and of course the Imperial Household Ministry were discouraged. Under the new standard, Privy Seal's advice would not have a substantial meaning on selection just as the emperor's nomination did not have a substantial meaning. The prime minister would be selected automatically based on the party politics.

4. Coda: The Results of the Reformation

One political system lasted 1927 as the result of the reformation after the First World War in Japan. I will use the term “1927-system” to refer to this political system. The 1927-system was founded by three elements. The first is a *popular election system* institutionalized in 1925. By this, the parliamentary foundation spread and its legitimacy increased. The second is a *party cabinet system* formed in 1927. By this, the political party was opened to the possibility of unifying the various organs of the Meiji Constitution and the people sat at the foundation of the politics. And the last is the *two-party system* formed in 1927. By this, political parties attach importance to the people-oriented policy further and the people had more influence to the decision-making.⁹⁰

The political reform after the First World War in Japan was the transition to the more democratic political management within the Meiji Constitutional System. The 1927-system was the product of the political reform from the system depending on the “individual” to the system depending on the “institution.”⁹¹ It was the third phase of the Meiji Constitutional System: It fitted the type of the *Poliarchy* Regime, following the Authoritarian Regime in the term of nation building and the Mixture Regime after about Russo-Japanese war.⁹²

It was also concerned closely with the policy as well. The 1927-system had the characteristic feature about the policy. It was aimed at the international cooperation on the foreign policies and the liberal-democratic policies base the party politics on the domestic policies. About the both sides of the system and the policy, it was the Japanese solution of the universal problem after the First World War.

Such political reforming process was not inevitable. There were other choices to organize the powerful cabinet in order to solve many problems after the First World War. Thus, the Japanese answer, formation of the party cabinet system, was chosen in some political routes and the competing national design. It was based on tacit common work of the

90. In addition, just the Great Britain type party cabinet system was caught as a reaching point of constitution politics. Surely, indirect method remained. But, the political custom of a party cabinet time was radical of the possibility of a Meiji constitutional system. (1) The party cabinet on the basis of the House of Representatives left for the generalization-position in the Meiji constitutional system many organizations was equal. (2) A party system is not a multiparty system but just the two big parties of the system. (3) It is the number of times of actual change of power. Juan Linz who discussed collapse of “competed type democracy” set the definition in the possibility of a political power party shift. He considered that a shift of a political power party is rather difficult in fact. Therefore, he made the standard the possibility instead of the fact of change of power. Nevertheless, in Japan of this time, the political power party shift was repeated three times in only eight years bearing a boy popular election in mind.

91. And there were two other meanings for reform after the First World War corresponding to Japan having held two subjects greatly. (1) Reform was for coping with the after the First World War world. (2) Reform is for resulting the point of a Meiji constitutional system reaching.

92. See Robert Dahl, *Poliarchy: participation and opposition*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971.

change movement from below, mainly party powers, and the change movement from above, mainly the last elder statesman, Kinmochi Saionji. Firstly, Takashi Hara and his party, the *Seiyukai*, had improved the political position of the political party in Meiji Constitutional System. Secondly, Takaaki Kato and his party, the *Kenseikai*, showed the goal, the party cabinet system based on the two-party system and advanced the political development drastically by becoming the second ruling party. Lastly, Kinmochi Saionji gave full play to his ability to institutionalize the new political style that the parties brought up in the Meiji Constitutional System.

Saionji's role on the political reform was decisive. Thus, finally, I will discuss his political leadership again and examine another characteristics of the 1927-system. Saionji's political leaderships may be divided into three types. The first was the guidance to the emperor about prime minister selections. In this case, his advice was not mere the advice to influence to the decision makers but political decision making itself. He tried simple administration alternation between the political party cabinets. He respected the party cabinet system that it was called "Normal Way of Constitutional Government" in the society. And for future, he was against appointing a new adviser to select the prime minister and wished the Keeper of the Privy Seal alone to fulfill responsibility after his death. The Privy Seal was the post whose individual political role had been criticized severely.⁹³ So, he could not become the real selector but only a superficial advisor. As one of the selector of the prime minister, the Privy Seal severely needed the leading person or the leading rule to his selection. Saionji gave the idea of "Normal Way of Constitutional Government" serious consideration as the rule of selecting the prime minister. Saionji did not fill the selector slot but made the Privy Seal the sole advisor. In short, he had pressed the establishment of the automatic selection system of the prime minister.⁹⁴

The second type of Saionji's guidance was to the emperor and to the Imperial Court bureaucrats. Saionji persuaded the emperor and the Imperial Court bureaucrats not to participate deeply in the political arena but to maintain an attitude of strict neutrality. For Saionji, the idea that the emperor and the Imperial Court bureaucrats should act neutrally in the political sphere was the way to maintain the respect for the emperor from the people and also it was related to the ideal concept of government. Saionji once said in 1930, "Now, it is the second creation time of the Imperial Household Ministry, I think.... Do study well, and do not be late for the social change."⁹⁵ Saionji's grandchild, Kimikazu Saionji, said that his grandfather's objective seemed to make the emperor system in Japan like

93. This point became serious problem in all the Movement of Protecting Constitutional Government.

94. The idea of "Normal Way of Constitutional Government" was needed in the point of way Privy Seal select by one as the rule of the administration changing. It had the purpose that political judgement should be avoided in the selection process. It had the political function that automatic select.

95. *Kido Diary*, p.49.

the King system in Great Britain expressed by the sentence: “the British sovereign reigns, but does not rule.”⁹⁶ Saionji sought this to be a key feature of the emperor under party politics.

The third and last was the guidance to other political actors. Saionji hoped for the cabinet whose prime minister was the party leader to unify the plural organs of the Meiji Constitution. And he tried to show his political influence in order to realize his goals.

These guidances had one outline. They are made for transferring the political part left in the elder statesmen to the political parties based on the plural party system. Saionji believed that lasting the role of the elder statesmen, or someone like, “might make future politics dirty and create the atmosphere contrary to the mind of the constitutional government.”⁹⁷ Generally, Saionji’s leadership searched for the national figure after the elder statesmen.⁹⁸

In conclusion, the succession of the party cabinets in the “period of party cabinets” was not the mere accumulation of the fact, but it was the process that a political party cabinet system was formed. A switchover to the party cabinet system was the result of the political reform after the First World War. And it was the reorganization of the Meiji Constitutional System to be adapted to a new age. There was the new system to select the person who should govern in the new age in modern Japan. It was the person who stands on the party system and receives the backing of public opinion.

96. Kimikazu Saionji, *Saionji Kimikazu Kaikoroku*, [Kimikazu Saionji Memoirs.] Ipec press, 1991, pp.18-9.

97. *Harada Diary*, vol.2, p.170.

98. The 1927-system had other characteristics. They were problems which arose because of the political party cabinet system. I want to point out two paradoxes here. The first is the paradox of the gradual and moderate progress, and the nature of reform. If the reform was not gradual and moderate, it could not succeed because there were many forces that opposed rapid change. But if the reform is gradual and moderate, the weakness of the reform can not be avoided. The second is the paradox of rule changing. The development of reform means that the rule is changing. But the rule changing creates the confusion that blocks the reform in a short time. The 1927-system became very weak in a short time because of the successes of the reform. In our short study, this problem can be mentioned only summarily. To inquire further into the matter would undoubtedly obscure the core of the argument.