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Between Appeasement and Accommodation: Kōmeitō's Policy Influence under Second Abe Administration

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(Received 22 June 2022; revised 8 January 2024; accepted 24 January 2024)

Abstract

This study examines the Kōmeitō's strategies for policy influence within the coalition framework with its coalition partner, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) during the period of Second Abe Administration (2012–2020). As a junior coalition partner, Kōmeitō faces unity–distinctiveness dilemma, where it must accommodate policy demands of the senior partner while appeasing its core support base, Sōka Gakkai. This article argues that the junior partner's strategies for policy influence are determined by two factors: overlap/distinctiveness of policy inclinations and the positive/negative issue associations measured by the level of involvement in decision-making, i.e. portfolio allocation. Three cases are analyzed to elucidate the diversity of Kōmeitō's policy influence, the strategies of which range from corrective moderation, to nudging, to threats, all utilized to maintain a balance between reinforcing “distinctiveness” from the senior partner and consolidating coalition coherence to sustain competence within the coalition framework.

Keywords: Kōmeitō; Liberal Democratic Party (LDP); junior partner strategies; Second Abe Administration; Sōka Gakkai

Introduction

The Kōmeitō, two-decade-long coalition partner to Japan's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), is a unique actor in the nation's political market. Occupying less than ten percent of seat share in the upper and lower houses,¹ its influence is disproportionate to its size. As a junior coalition partner,² Kōmeitō has remained a critical actor due to its successful coalition alliance with the dominant party over the last two decades (except for the period of three-year-rule by the Democratic Party of Japan from 2009 to 2012). In particular, the party's support base, which is “by far the largest single source of organized votes in Japan” (Klein and Reed 2014, 26), has allowed a significant number of LDP's district candidates to win in the competitive districts during general

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elections (Kabashima 2014, 321–328; Kawato 2004, 270–274; Liff and Maeda 2019). While “electoral alliances” tend to be limited and temporary in other democracies (Duverger 1964; Golder 2005; Christiansen, Nielsen, and Pedersen 2014), the LDP–Kōmeitō coalition has managed to institutionalize highly sophisticated inter-party electoral cooperation throughout its operation.

Despite the sustainability of the two-party coalition, on the other hand, the LDP–Kōmeitō partnership has experienced conflicts of interests deriving from disagreements over ideological platforms as well as policy preferences. While it is not rare for parties in coalition to disagree over policies, the ways in which they overcome these differences (or fail to do so) diverge across cases (Strøm, Müller, and Bergman 2008). In the case of the LDP–Kōmeitō alliance, the durability of the coalition partnership is explained through Kōmeitō’s vital role in maintaining LDP’s electoral dominance, while the junior partner enjoys incorporation of its policy demands in return (Nakakita 2017; Nakano 2016; Yakushiji 2016). This votes-for-policies theorem, on the other hand, requires attention to the internal dynamics of this religion-based political organization. On the one hand, Kōmeitō as a junior coalition partner must accommodate policy demands from the dominant party in order to maintain coalition coherence. On the other hand, it must also sustain “uniqueness” in the eyes of its supporters, namely the Sōka Gakkai members, who, on some critical issues, display significant ideological and policy distances from the LDP.

This study aims to uncover the strategies for policy influence delivered by a coalition’s junior partner in its attempt to resolve the “unity–distinctiveness dilemma” (McEnhill 2015; Boston and Bullock 2010) by shedding light on the case of Kōmeitō in Japan. Embedded within the unequal power structure of coalition partnership, small parties in coalitions must face a series of strategic choices in sustaining its own party identity while remaining cohesive to the overall framework of coalition government. Essentially, such a dilemma goes hand in hand with the fact that their power to end the government coincides with the potential loss of power. In other words, the successful policy influence enhances the legitimacy of junior partner within the coalition framework in the eyes of its supporters, while its failure to respond to their demands would invite poor electoral performances and possible loss of power.

This article proposes a two-dimensional typology for the strategy for policy influence delivered by a coalition’s junior partner by drawing upon overlap/distinctiveness of policy inclination and the positive/negative issue associations measured by the level of involvement in the decision-making process. Specifically, we focus on the strategies of Kōmeitō’s policy influence vis-à-vis the LDP during the period of second Abe administration (December 2012–September 2020) for two reasons. First, the relative stability of the administration allows us to investigate Kōmeitō as junior partner under a single leadership. Second, throughout the second tenure of Prime Minister Abe, the two parties’ ideological as well as policy distance grew significantly, especially in such fields as security policies and constitutional revision (Taniguchi 2020, 103), imposing a series of strategic dilemma for the junior partner. As a party that upholds pacifism and humanism as the founding principles, Kōmeitō faced unprecedented challenges in delimiting the prime minister’s professed drives

for hardline security agendas on the one hand (Nakano 2016, 152–188), and appealing Sōka Gakkai through the implementation of its policy demands, on the other. This article argues that, as a junior coalition partner, Kōmeitō employs a variety of strategies to assert influence on policymaking in order primarily to appease its support base, while accommodating senior partner's policy demands to maintain coalition coherence.

To illuminate the dynamics of Kōmeitō's strategies for policy influence, this article is structured as follows. The following section reviews the existing literature to propose a typology for junior partner strategies for policy influence. The third section discusses three elements of Kōmeitō's political profile as a junior partner: positive/negative issue associations from a historical perspective, the party's policy emphases in relations to the LDP's during the second Abe administration, and the portfolio allocation to uncover the level of involvement in decision-making. The fourth section carries out three case studies which highlight diverse strategies for policy influence vis-à-vis the LDP by illustrating the process of intra-coalition policy negotiations.

Junior partner strategies for policy influence

The strategic dilemma the smaller parties in coalition face in their pursuit of policy goals is embedded within the necessity to appease the core support base while accommodating policy demands from the senior partner. On the one hand, as a “minor” party, it is critical to select a unique policy field to emphasize, because electoral performance depends on the successful choice of policy emphases that are “distinct” from mainstream parties (Meguid 2005). In fact, existing studies show that small parties do better electorally by differentiating themselves from the mainstream parties, and they are likely to remain fixed upon signature policies (Adams et al. 2006, 82–83; Ezrow 2010; Abou-Chadi, Green-Pedersen, and Mortensen 2020). On the other hand, unlike niche parties competing against mainstream parties, it is insufficient for a coalition's junior partner to simply “stand out”: it also must achieve a certain level of coalition “coherence” (unity) in order to stay in power. Put differently, the spectrum of junior partner's strategies for policy influence ranges between the reinforcement of its distinctive policy agendas and the consolidation of coalition unity by accommodating senior partner's policy pursuit.

From a strategic perspective, the ways in which a junior partner deals with this dilemma are susceptible to the senior partner's positions on particular policies. Depending on the level of agreements/disagreements over policy goals, the junior partner can either take advantage of the overlap in policy inclination to enhance coalition unity, or reinforce the party's unique position within the coalition when disagreements exist. Put simply, the strategic outlook for the junior partner diverges most primarily depending on whether there is an overlap or divergence of policy inclinations in relations to the policy positions of the senior partner.

The critical difference between minor parties that are competing “against” mainstream parties and the coalition's “junior” partner lies in the fact that policy disagreements must be contained in order to avoid coalition termination. Under this condition, the junior partner selectively emphasizes some of the policies that are highly critical to the interests of its core supporters, while neglecting others in

order to minimize intra-coalition tensions over possibly disagreeable policy topics. Saliency theory explains that political parties selectively structure different topics among themselves for the maximization of electoral prospects, rather than engaging with direct confrontations over the same policy topic (Budge and Farlie 1983). In the context of policy compartmentalization among coalition partners, a junior partner is likely to display assertiveness in its pursuit of policies that are deemed critical for the mobilization of core supporters, while it may choose to neglect, or “sit out,” some of the policy topics that do not serve its electoral or political interests.

The junior partner’s selective emphasis on policy topics as well as the overlooking of some policy agendas are legitimized through the party’s “issue associations,” the party’s established reputation of policy competence in particular fields (Budge 2015, 771). Cultivated through long-term attention to specific policy areas that are targeted primarily to appease the party’s core supporters (Bélanger and Meguid 2008), an established issue association allows smaller parties to concentrate their electoral and political resources on a limited number of issues. Such linkage to specific policy fields works to the small party’s advantage in two ways. First, minor parties can concentrate their political resources on a selected set of issues rather than attending to a wide range of policy agendas. Second, it allows small parties to neglect some policy agendas when need be, unlike larger, mainstream parties who cannot easily “disown” political agendas on the table (Budge 2015, 766). In other words, small parties can exploit their “positive” issue association for the maximization of electoral prospects by appealing primarily to their core support base, while “negative” (or lack of) issue association would allow them to distance themselves from “unpopular” or “controversial” policy agendas and minimize voter exits.

In addition, the junior partner’s positive/negative issue associations are reflected upon portfolio allocation, as the junior partner strives to obtain ministerial positions related to policy fields with which they claim positive association in order to actively participate in the formation of policy outcome (Bäck, Debus, and Dumont 2011, 779). Conversely, if the junior partner is excluded from the decision-making process (i.e. lack of ministerial portfolio), it is likely that it would only have limited influence. Put simply, the allocation of portfolio indicates positive issue associations, while the lack of ministerial portfolio would indicate limited influence, or negative issue association, in the policy field.

Our discussion so far leads to a two-dimensional typology of junior partner’s strategies for policy influence (Table 1). On one dimension, the junior partner strategies

Table 1. Junior Partner strategies for policy influence

		POLICY INCLINATION	
		OVERLAP (UNITY)	DIVERGE (DISTINCTIVENESS)
ISSUE ASSOCIATION	Positive (assertive)	Nudging	Threat
	Negative (neglect)	Accommodation	Corrective modification

depend most primarily on whether the senior partner shares its policy inclinations. If policy inclinations overlap among the coalition partners, the junior partner can exploit the condition to appeal “unity” of the partnership. Even when the parties in coalition share similar policy inclinations, however, the junior partner’s strategies may vary depending on the nature of issue association. If the policy at hand serves the interests of its core supporters, and therefore the party claims positive issue association, the small party is likely to assert influence on the context of the policies by persuading the senior partner to incorporate (at least some of) its demands (Nudging), while the junior partner may simply accommodate the policy proposals by the senior partner when the issue is not the primary concern for its core supporters (Accommodation). On the other hand, the divergences or disagreements over policies can be manipulated as the ground for establishing “distinctiveness.” In extreme cases, where the intra-coalition disagreements over policies occur in the policy fields with which the junior partner claims strong positive issue association, the junior partner can threaten to leave the coalition (Threat) (Kaarbo 1996). At the same time, when the coalition partners experience a divergence in policy inclination in policy fields where the junior partner does not claim positive issue association, the small party’s attempts to insert influence would be limited; still, it may try to insert some influence over the context as well as the process of policymaking through such means as partial rejection of the policy agenda and/or minor modifications to the contexts of the policies in order to appeal “distinctiveness” to the electorates (Corrective Modification) (Oppermann and Brummer 2013, 557–559).

Kōmeitō’s Issue Associations

Before applying the above typology to uncover Kōmeitō’s strategies for policy influence during the Second Abe Administration (2012–2020), this section focuses on three aspects of the junior partner’s political profile—issue associations, policy emphases, and portfolio allocation—to analyze the level of involvement in policymaking. First, we uncover Kōmeitō’s issue associations, both positive and negative, by shedding light on the party’s historical development as a ‘party for the masses’ with an internal oscillation when it comes to Japan’s security postures. Second, by comparing the candidates’ policy priorities as well as election manifestos for the 2012, 2014, and 2017 general elections, we analyze the development of Kōmeitō’s selective emphasis in primary policies. Lastly, we analyze the Kōmeitō’s involvement in policymaking by illuminating the portfolio allocation during the second Abe administration.

Kōmeitō’s issue associations from a historical perspective

The Kōmeitō’s historical development suggests that the party’s positive issue association with social welfare policies—particularly with education and household subsidies—and its negative association, or general disinclination, when it comes to the issue of expanding Japan’s security roles and defense capabilities. Like junior coalition partners in other democracies, Kōmeitō faces a “unity–distinctiveness dilemma,” but the incentive to deal with it derives almost exclusively from its relations with its support organization, Sōka Gakkai. Established as a political branch of the Buddhist lay organization, the Kōmeitō has received loyal support from the religious

group throughout its development. Sōka Gakkai followers, synonymously identified as Kōmeitō supporters, engage in an avid and holistic electoral campaigning in their daily activities, which they consider “religious” practices (Ehrhardt 2014b; McLaughlin 2014). Because Kōmeitō receives little support from non-Gakkai circles, the party’s policy pursuit is directed towards satisfying its core support organization. In other words, the drive for Kōmeitō to deal with its unity–distinctiveness dilemma within the coalition framework derives from the party’s need to appease the Sōka Gakkai membership, who demonstrate strong inclination for social welfare policies such as affordable education and subsidies for low-income families, while showing strong aversion toward the expansion of Japan’s security roles and defense capabilities (Klein and McLaughlin 2022; Ehrhardt 2009).

Contrary to the party’s cohesive pursuit of welfare-oriented policies, however, the Kōmeitō’s policy positions over the question of Japan’s national security have vacillated over the course of its development. The first internal tension was caused as the party was forced to abandon its “religious” goals in the 1970s. At its establishment in 1964, the Kōmeitō upheld four religion-based objectives: natural unification of two worlds (secular and religious) (*ōbutsu myōgō*), realization of mass welfare based on humanitarian socialism, establishment of mass party through Buddhist democracy, and establishment of parliamentary democracy (Murakami 1969, 21–23). Colored strongly by “religious” conduct with progressivist inclination, Sōka Gakkai and Kōmeitō exponentially increased its membership in the 1960s with aggressive proselytization, mobilizing more than five million votes in the 1969 general election with ten percent vote share. The “religious party” was forced to undertake organizational restructuring and secularization, however, as the public image plummeted after the so-called “press suppression incident” (Azumi 1971). The incident, which revealed that Kōmeitō/Sōka Gakkai obstructed the publication of a book that criticized Sōka Gakkai, forced them to abandon their “religious” pursuit of realizing “Buddhist ideology” and instead explore new policy fields to accentuate. What followed was a period of uncertainty, particularly concerning the policy stance toward Japan’s national security. In the 1973 campaign policy, Kōmeitō put forth “immediate termination of US–Japan security treaty,” stating the possible unconstitutionality of the Self-Defence Force. By 1981, however, such a strongly progressivist stance on the SDF and national security was completely redrawn, as the Kōmeitō upheld the constitutionality of the SDF and admitted the importance of the security treaty with the US for Japan’s security (Yakushiji 2016, 83–90). Abe and Endo’s (2014) study elucidates the organization’s vacillation between centrist and hardline security policies during this period, concluding that the Kōmeitō voters “failed to form ideologically consistent positions” in security issues (Abe and Endo 2014, 101). In fact, the most controversial policy area, which often causes rigorous internal debates within Kōmeitō/Sōka Gakkai, is security related. While Kōmeitō has slowly shifted its official party stance regarding security policies since the 1970s, Sōka Gakkai has largely been reluctant to accept the idea of Japan obtaining larger security roles.

Scholars and journalists have highlighted that the fundamental reason for this reluctance lays with Sōka Gakkai’s core internal organ, namely the married women’s division (*fujinbu*). The married women’s division carries out the most critical and ardent electioneering in mobilizing not only non-Gakkai members but also in

encouraging less enthusiastic followers within the organization (Ehrhardt 2014b, 129–134). Being the most fundamentalist group, it exhibits strong inclination for pacifist ideology inherited from the religion’s spiritual leader, Ikeda Daisaku (Tahara 2018, 303–304). Due to the division’s significant influence within the organization, the Kōmeitō leadership is highly susceptible to its demands, which often determine the party’s policy stance on controversial issues such as constitutional revision (Nakano 2016, 167–173).

The influence of the married women’s division is reflected upon Kōmeitō’s general preference for status quo when it comes to Japan’s security policies, as well as the high level of assertion when it comes to expanding social welfare. In other words, the Kōmeitō’s positive issue association derives from this division’s preference for providing household subsidies such as allowances for child and elderly care, which are traditionally considered “housewives’ jobs” in Japanese society (Ehrhardt 2014a). The party often strongly pushes for costly social welfare agendas such as medical and childcare support even when it causes conflicts with the LDP (Hasunuma and Klein 2014). On the other hand, Sōka Gakkai’s resolute stance toward non-expansion of Japan’s defense capabilities and security roles in general has historically yielded Kōmeitō’s reluctance to attend to security agendas, in order to deter the risk of igniting a caustic internal discord. Furthermore, the policy distance between the LDP and the junior partner, especially on security-related issues, often became the cause of intra-coalitional tension from the early stage of the coalition government (Kato and Laver 2003; Kabashima and Yamamoto 2004). As the LDP leadership inched forward on lifting the restrictions of the SDF’s overseas activities in the post-Cold War context, Kōmeitō’s ideological pillars—pacifism (*heiwa shugi*) and ‘humanism’ (*nin-gen shugi*)—were constantly challenged both by the Sōka Gakkai followers who underscored the party’s role as a ‘brake’ against LDP’s hardline agendas, and the senior partner who questioned the competence of the junior partner’s role in endorsing its policy pursuit.

Alterations in Kōmeitō’s policy emphases in general elections, 2012–2017

Such tension between the two coalition partners expanded even further during the second Abe administration, not only because of the prime minister’s personal aspirations but also due to the overwhelming hold of the lower house by the LDP throughout the prime minister’s tenure. Kōmeitō’s party president Yamaguchi Natsuo, often expressed discomfort towards prime minister Abe’s overbearing attitudes in the pursuit of controversial agendas (Nakano 2016, 161–162). The Kōmeitō repeatedly appealed to the public—and Sōka Gakkai—with the claim that Kōmeitō played the role of a “brake” against the cabinet’s overwhelming majority in the parliament (Ushio Henshuubu 2014, 20–22; Sato and Yamaguchi 2016, 60–64).

Given the structural limitation in entirely thwarting the prime minister’s hawkish drive in the security agenda, the Kōmeitō attempted to overcome the discrepancy by accentuating its positive association with social security agendas, highlighting its party identity as “party for the masses.” On the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the Kōmeitō in 2014, a number of publications sprang up to refurbish Kōmeitō’s party identity as a party of “peace,” “welfare,” “environment,” and “clarity”

(Kōmeitōshi hensan iinkai 2014, 10). Claiming that, with the foundational pillar that value the concept set forth by the founder of the party, “with the people” (*taishū to tomoni*), it underscored the tradition and experiences as “a party of grassroots democracy” (Ushio Henshuubu 2014, 13–14). Yamaguchi emphasized the Kōmeitō’s supplementary role in incorporating “real-life” demands from the people and local communities, a field of agenda “often overlooked by the dominant partner” (Sato and Yamaguchi 2016, 148–150).

Such behaviors illuminate the party’s strategic maneuvering in dealing with the unity–distinctiveness dilemma by highlighting the positive association with social welfare policies while minimizing its involvement in the discussion concerning national security. An analysis of the changes in candidates’ policy preferences helps grasp the alteration in policy emphases. Conducted on running candidates shortly before national elections, the UTAS surveys provide temporal perspectives regarding the development of policy inclinations among the candidates of the two parties.³ Figure 1 compares each party members’ average scores in the 2003 survey with those average scores from three surveys conducted prior to 2012, 2014, and 2017 general elections.⁴ Table 2 shows seven questions that were commonly asked in each of the four surveys. In 2003, the policy distance between Kōmeitō and LDP candidates were closest on the issue of “government size” and “public works,” while it was farthest away on “pre-emptive strikes on imminent threats,” “privacy rights,” and “increasing of Japan’s defense capabilities.” Such tendencies sustained in three surveys conducted from 2012 to 2017, in which the candidates from the two parties shared the closest propensities for monetary stimulus and public works, while their positions on security issues suggested significant distance from one another. In other words, while the candidates from the two parties are likely to disagree less on financial and monetary policies, the intra-coalition disagreements are most significant on foreign and security policies. Significantly, Kōmeitō candidates’ preference for “big government,” measured in the fourth question, has expanded in later surveys than in 2003, widening the distance from the LDP candidates. It is possible to interpret such “pull” away from the senior partner as the result of junior partner’s extended emphasis on positive issue association with welfare policies, which serves to appeal distinctiveness from the senior partner (Nakakita 2019, 256–266).

In addition to the candidates’ policy preferences, the alterations of primary agendas in election manifestos also indicate Kōmeitō’s strategies to deal with the inherent unity–distinctiveness dilemma. In party manifestos, Kōmeitō’s most critical agenda for each election developed from “reconstruction of Japan” (2012), to “implementation of VAT relief system” (2014), to “reducing the cost of education” (2017). In 2012 and 2014, the two parties landed on somewhat similar policy fields to emphasize on the top of party manifestos—“reconstruction (from the 3.11 triple disaster)” in 2012 and “economic reconstruction” in 2014. In 2017, on the other hand, Kōmeitō circumvented security agendas and focused on the reduction of the cost of education and other social welfare policies, while the senior partner was focused highly on the security concerns amid the rising tension between the US and North Korea (Table 3).

Furthermore, the surveys conducted on individual candidates suggest similar patterns of overlap/distinctiveness of policy selections between the candidates of the two parties (Table 4). In the pre-election surveys, the candidates were asked what they

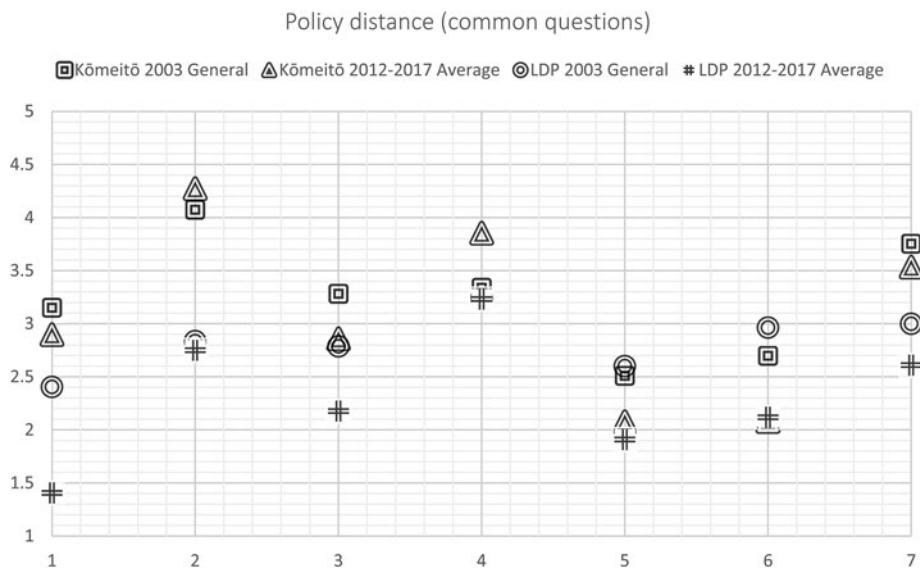


Figure 1. Policy distance between LDP and Kōmeitō candidates, 2003-2017 (Source: UTAS Surveys 2003-2017) (Bottom numbers indicate the questions asked in the surveys, shown in Table2)

Table 2. List of common questions (politicians survey, UTAS 2003-2017)

1	Japan’s defense capabilities must be strengthened.
2	Preemptive strike must be considered when there is risk of physical confrontation from other states
3	Pressure, rather than dialogue, must be priorities in dealing with North Korea.
4	It is better to operate small government at the cost of deteriorating social and welfare services.
5	Providing job security through public projects is important.
6	For the time being, the government should increase public spending to boost the economy and facilitate financial rehabilitation.
7	To preserve civic order, right to privacy and personal information must be limited.

considered the “most critical issue” for the election. In 2012, 18.5 percent of Kōmeitō candidates chose “reconstruction and disaster prevention” to be the most critical issue, followed by “employment” (13.0), “financial/monetary policies” (9.3) and “industrial policy” (9.3).⁵ The LDP candidates, on the other hand, showed less interests in “disaster/reconstruction” but rather emphasized the issue of “pension and medical system” (20.6), “employment” (15.4), and “education/childcare” (14.2). With the shared goal of “ousting” the DPJ government amid “recovery” from the triple disaster, it is possible to assess that the coalition partners were focused on establishing opposing platforms vis-à-vis the DPJ while displaying interests in diverse policy fields. In 2014, on the other hand, the policy saliency showed an even higher level of overlap between the candidates of the two parties, who were mostly concerned with economic policies.⁶ On the contrary, in 2017, the candidates displayed a stark contrast in their choice of critical agendas. For the LDP, security and diplomatic concerns overwhelmed other political issues as 48 percent of the candidates responded as the most critical agenda. Kōmeitō candidates, on the other hand, demonstrated a high level of coherence on the education/childcare issues, with overwhelming 66 percent of the candidates choosing as the most critical issue.

The emphases of policy agendas during election campaigns show that not only are primary agendas altered over time and across elections by political parties and candidates, but also that a junior partner strategically differentiates the choice of salient issues from the senior partner when policy inclinations significantly diverge. It is noteworthy that the Kōmeitō candidates, when asked to choose the “most critical policy agenda” for the election, demonstrated the highest degree of coherence in 2017, when 66 percent of the candidates chose “education and childcare.” In the previous elections, however, they showed less than enthusiastic interests in the policy area—less than 6 percent in both elections.

Kōmeitō’s portfolio allocation during Second Abe Administration (2012–2020)

The junior partner selects policy emphases only when it possesses effective means to assert influence on policy formation—that is, when it has access to the policymaking processes. As discussed, parties’ positive issue associations can be measured by

Table 3. Critical agendas in party manifestos

	2012 GENERAL		2014 GENERAL		2017 GENERAL	
	LDP	Kōmeitō	LDP	Kōmeitō	LDP	Kōmeitō
	Bring back Japan	Reconstruction of Japan	Economic recovery	Implementing reduced tax rates	Protecting Japan	Reducing the burdens for education
1	Reconstruction and disaster prevention	Reconstruction, Safety	Economic recovery, reconstruction	Strong economy through local revitalization	Protecting the people from North Korean threats	Reducing financial burden for education
2	economic growth	Regional governance, Political and administrative reforms	Regional revitalization	Enhancing social welfare and education	Achieving economic recovery and ending deflation through Abenomics	Powerful economy
3	Education, science, culture, sports	New energy, Zero nuclear power plant	Promoting social participation of women	Recovery/ reconstruction	Increase productivity, higher income	Social/welfare policies
4	Foreign and security policies	New growth strategy, sustainable economic growth	Financial reconstruction	Political and administrative reforms	Free education for pre-school children	Enhancing recovery/ disaster prevention
5		New welfare, social safety net		Foreign policies for sustainable peace and prosperity	Local economy vitalization	
6		Welfare for the children (education)			Constitutional revision	
7		Reconstructing Japan's diplomacy				

Table 4. “Most critical issue” for individual candidates

	2012		2014		2017	
	LDP	Kōmeitō	LDP	Kōmeitō	LDP	Kōmeitō
Diplomacy, security	3.4%	0.0%	2.8%	0.0%	48.1%	7.5%
Financial, monetary policies	4.1%	9.3%	7.9%	19.6%	2.7%	0.0%
Industrial policy	7.9%	9.3%	17.6%	21.6%	8.4%	3.8%
Agriculture, forestry, fishery	3.0%	1.9%	2.8%	3.9%	1.8%	1.9%
Education, childcare	14.2%	5.6%	3.7%	5.9%	11.0%	66.0%
Pension, medical system	20.6%	1.9%	2.3%	5.9%	5.4%	1.9%
Employment	15.4%	13.0%	8.2%	13.7%	3.0%	5.7%
Civic order	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Environment	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%
Political and administrative reform	3.0%	1.9%	0.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Decentralization	2.2%	1.9%	0.3%	0.0%	0.6%	1.9%
Constitution	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.9%	0.0%
Reconstruction, disaster prevention	6.7%	18.5%	5.4%	7.8%	3.0%	1.9%
Social capital	0.7%	3.7%	0.8%	0.0%	0.9%	0.0%
Nuclear energy policy	7.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other	6.0%	18.5%	38.0%	17.6%	6.9%	3.8%
N/A	4.9%	16.7%	9.6%	3.9%	7.2%	5.7%

Data from: UTAS surveys (2012, 2014, 2017)

portfolio allocation, since parties in coalition negotiate into ministerial posts related to the policy field associated with the party, which simultaneously serves as one of the critical credentials for the junior partner to appeal to the core supporters. As a “party for the masses,” Kōmeitō has traditionally occupied cabinet posts that are closely related to Sōka Gakkai’s policy interests such as Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare (MHLW) (Hasunuma and Klein 2014). In addition, Kōmeitō has been allocated one minister post in the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, and Transport and Tourism (MLIT) since 2004, which became a fixed arrangement throughout the second Abe Administration.⁷

Table 5 shows Kōmeitō's portfolio allocation at state minister (*fukudaijin*) and parliamentary vice minister (*daijin seimukan*) levels through the second to fourth Abe cabinets. In addition to occupying one minister position, three Kōmeitō representatives served as state ministers and another three as parliamentary vice ministers in every cabinet.⁸ Throughout the second to fourth Abe cabinets, Kōmeitō members served state minister positions at the Ministry of Reconstruction and MHLW. The remaining position varied among Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI, to second reshuffle of third Abe cabinet), Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery (MAFF, third reshuffle of third Abe cabinet to fourth Abe cabinet), Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT, first reshuffle of fourth Abe cabinet), to Ministry of Finance (MOF, second reshuffle of fourth Abe cabinet). At the parliamentary vice minister level, Kōmeitō was given positions in such ministries as MOF, MAFF, MEXT, Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC), Foreign Affairs (MOFA) etc. (see Table 4). Interestingly, Ishikawa Hirotake became the first Kōmeitō representative to serve as parliamentary vice minister of the Ministry of Defense (MOD) from December 2014 to October 2015, during which the controversial security legislations were under evaluation in the parliament. This aberrant inclusion of Kōmeitō in high cabinet position of MOD not only demonstrates the senior partner's incorporation of the junior partner into the decision-making process on highly controversial issues, it also served the purpose of forging coalition coherence in policy fields in which the high degree of junior partner's resistance could impede reaching the policy goals.

In addition, Kōmeitō's portfolio allocation during this period reflected the party's issue association as well as policy emphases to maximize leverage over policy negotiation (Hasunuma and Klein 2014, 252–253). In 2014, Kōmeitō's utmost priority was to introduce a VAT relief system upon tax hike on consumption tax—and the party had gained a critical way in the MOF. Prior to the 2017 election, Kōmeitō had gained a parliamentary vice-ministerial position in MEXT, along with the regular state ministerial position in the MHLW, to enhance the policy leverage for implementing education subsidies for higher education, which was at the top of the agenda in their election manifesto.

Furthermore, while the cabinet posts in each ministry demonstrate Kōmeitō's higher negotiation power in certain policy fields, during the process of intra-coalition negotiation over potentially conflicting political issues, various channels of inter-party contact come to play. Upon the inauguration of the second Abe administration, the LDP and Kōmeitō reinstated the intra-coalition framework for policy adjustment, including the meeting of policy chiefs (*yotō seisaku sekininsha kaigi*, or *yoseki*), where the two parties come to final agreement on the context of legislation before proceeding to cabinet decisions (Nihon Keizai Shinbun 2012). The actual adjustment of the details of legislation, on the other hand, takes place within each party's decision-making bodies before it is brought to *yoseki*, often with the help from bureaucrats (Nakakita 2017, 124–127). On highly controversial issues, such as the cabinet decision on the approval of the exercise of the right of collective defense, the leaders of the two parties held an unofficial meeting in order to discuss the middle ground (Nakakita 2019, 270–271). The extent of “negotiation” ranges from personal contacts between the high officials of the parties, often through the bureaucratic

Table 5. Kōmeitō's post allocation (State Ministers, Parliamentary Vice Ministers, 2012-2020)

	State Ministers				Parliamentary Vice Ministers			
	Ministry				Ministry			
2nd Abe Cabinet	Reconstruction	Health, Labor, and Welfare	Economy, Trade and Industry*	Cabinet Office*	Finance	Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery	Environment*	Cabinet Office*
2nd Abe Cabinet (1st reshuffle)	Reconstruction	Health, Labor, and Welfare	Economy, Trade and Industry*	Cabinet Office*	Finance	Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery	Defense*	Cabinet Office*
3rd Abe Cabinet	Reconstruction	Health, Labor, and Welfare	Economy, Trade and Industry*	Cabinet Office*	Finance	Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery	Defense*	Cabinet Office*
3rd Abe Cabinet (1st reshuffle)	Reconstruction	Health, Labor, and Welfare	Economy, Trade and Industry*	Cabinet Office*	Foreign Affairs	Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery	Internal Affairs and Communications	
3rd Abe Cabinet (2nd reshuffle)	Reconstruction	Health, Labor, and Welfare	Economy, Trade and Industry*	Cabinet Office*	Finance	Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery	Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology	
3rd Abe Cabinet (3rd reshuffle)	Reconstruction	Health, Labor, and Welfare	Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery		Foreign Affairs	Economy, Trade and Industry*	Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology	Cabinet Office**
4th Abe Cabinet	Reconstruction	Health, Labor, and Welfare	Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery		Foreign Affairs	Economy, Trade and Industry*	Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology	Cabinet Office**

4th Abe Cabinet (1st reshuffle)	Reconstruction	Health, Labor, and Welfare	Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology*	Cabinet Office*	Finance	Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery	Internal Affairs and Communications	
4th Abe Cabinet (2nd reshuffle)	Reconstruction	Health, Labor, and Welfare	Finance		Economy, Trade and Industry*	Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery	Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology	Cabinet Office*

Data from Prime Minister's Office of Japan www.kantei.go.jp/jp/rekidainaikaku/index.html

channels, to direct meetings between the party leaderships. It is necessary to evaluate a range of intra-coalition channels to excavate the degrees as well as the processes through which the junior partner may exert influence.

Case Studies

Our discussions so far are summarized in Table 6. In this section, we present three case studies in order to provide specific contexts for as well as the process of intra-coalition negotiation, and to show how the junior partner asserted influence on policymaking in order to establish “distinctiveness” vis-à-vis the senior partner. Specifically, the three cases analyzed below satisfy two criteria: that the Kōmeitō had varying degrees of disagreements with the LDP over the agendas, and that the contexts of policies underwent some alterations due to Kōmeitō’s maneuverings. The three cases are: (1) a cabinet decision on the interpretation of the constitution regarding the right of collective self-defense, (2) the introduction of VAT relief system, and (3) free private high school education. In the first case, reinterpretation of Article 9 of the constitution, Kōmeitō had an objective to appeal ‘distinctiveness’ especially to appease Sōka Gakkai, but was only able to assert limited influence during the decision-making process. The remaining two cases were both highly salient for the junior partner who had access to policy negotiation, but the methods as well as the degrees of influence diverged due to the senior partner’s policy inclinations.

Table 6. Summary of Kōmeitō’s strategy for policy influence

		Policy Inclination	
		Overlap (unity)	Divergence (distinctiveness)
Post Allocation (issue association)	Included (positive)	NUDGING Reducing education cost (private high school education)	THREAT VAT relief
	Excluded (negative)	ACCOMODATION	CORRECTIVE MODIFICATION Security legislation (2015) (Constitutional revision)

Corrective modification: Cabinet decision on the reinterpretation of Article 9 of the Constitution

Perhaps nothing better symbolizes Kōmeitō’s unity/distinctive dilemma than its attitude toward constitutional revision. Whereas the political parties in Japan are roughly divided between ‘pro-revision’ (*kaiken*) and ‘anti-revision’ (*goken*) blocs, Kōmeitō

claims to take on the ‘pro-modification’ (*kaken*) stance. In 2004, Kōmeitō’s party committee on the constitution put together a report on the party’s general stance on the issue. It stated that the Kōmeitō abides by the interpretation of Article 9 that does not allow the exercise of the right of collective self-defense (Kōmeitō Committee on Constitutional Revision 2004, 4). At the same time, claiming that three core principles of the Japanese constitution—sovereignty of the people, permanent peace, and fundamental human rights—can never be violated, it also did not eliminate the possibility for the necessity to arise where the Japanese people must make some adjustments to the constitution as the external situations undergo drastic changes.

That challenge became a reality soon after the 2013 upper house election, when the intra-coalition negotiation set out to discuss the specific extent of the ‘reinterpretation’ of Article 9, as well as the exact wording to be put out in the cabinet decision on the exercise of the right of collective self-defense (CSD). Prime Minister Abe had been vocal about his desire to legalize the CSD since his first term (Abe 2006), and his ambition remained intact after 2012. A few months after returning to office, the prime minister relaunched the Advisory Panel on Reconstruction of the Legal Basis for Security, holding the second-ever meeting since it was first established in 2007 under the first Abe cabinet. Contrary to Abe’s enthusiasm, on the other hand, Kōmeitō remained reluctant to push this agenda, showing no interest in hurrying the process of intra-coalition negotiations and claiming that economic matters were far more important (Harris 2020, 242). In other words, the policy saliency as well as inclinations diverged significantly between the two parties.

One other feature regarding this critical issue was Kōmeitō’s negative association with this particular agenda. Kōmeitō had largely been excluded from high cabinet positions in defense and justice ministries, creating few bureaucratic channels in the related field throughout the two-decade-long coalition partnership. While Kōmeitō’s party president Yamaguchi Natsuo was reluctant to accept the LDP’s terms, he was virtually excluded from the negotiation table. Instead, it was vice party president Kitagawa Kazuo who was entrusted with the negotiation process over the context of the cabinet decision, but his position remained defensive at best against the like-minded group of four Abe-entrusted high officials (Asahi Shinbun Seijibu Shuzaihan 2015).⁹ Such passivity of Kōmeitō reflected Sōka Gakkai’s internal uncertainties concerning the cabinet decision, dividing those who prioritize the maintaining of coalition framework from those who remained persistent in adhering to “pacifist” principle (Nakano 2016, 190–218).

Under these conditions, Kitagawa’s (and Kōmeitō’s) strategy was focused on limiting the extent to which the exercise of CSD can be applied without challenging the foundation of prime minister’s policy drive. And by paying meticulous attention to the word choice and phrasing of the context, the junior partner settled on making a few symbolic modifications. The original report, announced on May 15, 2014, by the advisory panel, claimed that the right of CSD can be permitted “when a foreign country that is in a close relationship with Japan comes under an armed attack and if such a situation has the potential to significantly affect the security of Japan” (The Advisory Panel on Reconstruction of the Legal Basis for Security 2014, 29–30). In the cabinet decision passed in July after rigorous negotiations, the corresponding

phrase was rephrased as following: “[the right of CSD is allowed when] armed attack against Japan occurs [or] an armed attack against a foreign country that is in a close relationship with Japan occurs and as a result threatens Japan’s survival and *poses a clear danger to fundamentally overturn people’s right to life, liberty and pursuit of happiness*” (emphasis added) (Liff 2017, 161). This condition became a critical pillar of the so-called “three new conditions” (*shin san yōken*) along with two other conditions that must be met for Japan to participate in the collective security efforts.¹⁰ The point, according to Yamaguchi Natsuo, was that Kōmeitō succeeded in reassuring the principle of exclusive defense (*senshu bōei*), and by clearly stating that the right of CSD can be exercised only when “people’s”—not Japan’s—basic rights became under attack (Mainichi Shinbun 2014). Essentially, Kōmeitō’s strategic maneuverings constrained the LDP leadership’s original objective—reinterpretation of Article 9 to allow the participation in collective security operations—to a largely limited exercise of the CSD (Liff and Maeda 2019, 13).

Nudging: Free private high school education

While the above case illustrated how negative issue association as well as diverging policy inclination generated Kōmeitō’s defensive strategy, the junior partner can become assertive when it comes to policy negotiation with which it has strong issue association. One of the exemplary cases that demonstrated Kōmeitō’s “nudging” strategy during the second Abe administration was found during the coalition’s pursuit of implementing extensive subsidies for education cost. Facing the 2017 general election, the LDP and Kōmeitō set forth distinct policy priorities. The LDP’s primary concern for the election was laid upon the strengthening of US–Japan security alliance and nuclear deterrence, incited by North Korean aggression and the regime’s escalating tension with the Trump administration. On the other hand, Kōmeitō placed the alleviation of education cost as the primary agenda, proposing extended free education for preschool children (ages 0 to 5), achieving free private high school education (for household income less than 5.9 million yen), and expanding scholarship and tuition exemption for college-level education (Kōmeitō 2017). At the same time, LDP also acknowledged the issue of free childcare and education as one of the critical agendas for the election in the context of ongoing labor market reform and achieving “all-generation social welfare system” (*zen seditaigata shakai hoshō*)—the “second arrow” of the new Abenomics (Jimintō 2017).

While the coalition partners were united in their pursuit of lowering education costs, the LDP was rather reluctant when it came to subsidies for *private high school* tuitions. Kōmeitō’s manifesto stated clear policy goal of achieving the tuition exemption for private high school education by 2019, while the LDP only referred to the necessity of providing free higher education for the children who require “critical financial support,” without mentioning the details of policy target or the time frame. To bridge the gap in the extent of “free education,” the Kōmeitō exploited its positions in the related ministries. Not only did Kōmeitō have a member serving as parliamentary vice minister in the ministry of education (MEXT) since the second reshuffle of the third Abe administration in August 2016, it also accelerated its claim on strong issue association by illuminating past achievements such as achieving “free

textbooks” for elementary school in 1969 and introducing the first child allowance in 1972.¹¹

The contents of intra-coalition negotiation reflected Kōmeitō’s “nudging” strategies over the inclusion of tuition exemption for private high schools. While admitting the importance of providing “seamless relief measures” for education costs, the LDP was initially evasive about securing a sufficient budget that could reach up to three-hundred billion yen.¹² Even the post-election coalition agreement did not specify the context of relief measures for education cost, while Kōmeitō insisted that the two party leaders had agreed upon implementing tuition exemptions for private high schools (Kōmei Shinbun 2017). Kōmeitō continued to pressure the senior partner after the election in house committees, to which the newly appointed Minister of Education Hayashi Yoshimasa responded that the ministry was undertaking rigorous evaluation of the Kōmeitō proposals.¹³

The cabinet decision on a “Policy Package for New Economic Policies” (*atarashii Keizai seisaku pakke-ji*) signed on December 8, 2017, reflected Kōmeitō’s incessant nudging of the senior partner for including the tuition exemption for private high school educations, and the tuition exemption for private high school went into effect starting from the school year beginning in 2020. The effectiveness of the junior partner’s policy influence can be explained by their positive issue association as well as the inclusion in the decision-making process, as well as the overlaps in policy inclinations with the coalition partner.

Threat: VAT relief

Kōmeitō and LDP had many disagreements over the years, but Nakano (2016, 259) claims that the coalition agreement regarding the implementation of VAT relief system reached in December 2015 was one of the first cases where Kōmeitō’s policy demands were “fully” incorporated into the cabinet decision despite intra-coalition disagreements. Regarding the introduction of VAT relief system upon the take hike to ten percent scheduled in April 2017, there was a considerable level of disagreements between the two coalition partners. The original plan compiled by the LDP and the ministry of finance (MOF) to narrow the qualifications for the VAT relief was completely overturned upon the junior partner’s demand that they apply the lower tax rates for all food products (fresh and processed) simultaneously with the tax hike.

In *LDP–Kōmeitō Outline of Tax System Revision for 2013*, announced on January 24, 2013, the two parties simply agreed to “make efforts to introduce VAT relief system upon the VAT hike to ten percent,” leaving the contexts of the policies for future deliberations (LDP and Kōmeitō 2013a, 7). The *LDP–Kōmeitō Outline of Tax System Revision for 2014*, announced in December the same year, claimed that the timing of the introduction of relief system would be “sometime when the VAT is at ten percent rate,” hinting that the system may not be introduced simultaneously with the tax hike (LDP and Kōmeitō 2013b, 6). Such rephrasing reflected the reservations of the MOF as well as the LDP, whose utmost concerns derived from low tax revenues if the relief system was installed. In response to this, Kōmeitō’s Yamaguchi Natsuo continued to pressure the LDP leadership to implement what was promised to the public (Sankei Biz 2015).

The full-scale intra-coalition negotiation took off in September 2015, as the MOF proposed the implementation of a “Japanese-style” VAT relief system, whose central idea was to replace the double-rate system with a tax refund system for food-related products. Kōmeitō and its support base fiercely opposed the proposed plan, claiming that the procedures for applying for the tax refund were too complex and unrealistic. On the other hand, the LDP’s chief of tax commission Noda Takeshi and secretary-general Tanigaki Teiichi persisted on the MOF proposal, insisting that the processed food would not be applicable for the relief system. As the negotiations remained at a stalemate between the LDP and the Kōmeitō, the junior partner’s head of tax commission Saitō Tetsuo went as far as mentioning the possibility of withdrawing from electoral cooperation in the upcoming upper house election (Bloomberg 2015). Kōmeitō’s Ota Akihiro and President Yamaguchi incessantly appealed directly to prime minister Abe and chief cabinet secretary Suga Yoshihide, insinuating the “consequences” for electoral cooperation if they failed to meet their demands (Nakano 2016, 252–259). As the Kōmeitō’s “threat” reached an unprecedented level, prime minister Abe replaced Noda with much more conforming Miyazawa Yōichi, pressuring Tanigaki to incorporate Kōmeitō’s demands to the fullest extent. In the end, on December 12, 2015, the coalition announced that they had reached an agreement on the implementation of VAT relief system, which reflected Kōmeitō’s policy goals of making “all food products (except for alcohol) and the newspaper” eligible for tax relief (Nihon Keizai Shinbun 2015).

The Kōmeitō’s high pressure on the LDP regarding the VAT relief was motivated by strong positive issue association, as the party had placed the issue at the top of election manifesto for the 2014 general election (Kōmeitō 2014, 4). The LDP, on the other hand, was less than enthusiastic about the relief measure, claiming that it is necessary to reach consensus among the related business communities before the system can be operated properly under the new VAT rates (Jimintō 2014, 8). Along with the diverging policy inclinations, the high degree of Kōmeitō’s assertiveness was reinforced by its involvement in the decision-making. Along with the budgetary planning, the annual tax revisions are composed as joint venture for the ruling coalition every year, whose deliberations are carried out primarily at the LDP–Kōmeitō Council for Tax System (*yotō zeisei kyōgikai*) before approved by *yoseki* (Nakakita 2019, 270). The junior partner utilized “threat”—withdrawing from electoral cooperation—as the strategy for policy influence in order to establish “distinctiveness” to appease Kōmeitō voters.

Conclusion

This study has analyzed the case of Kōmeitō during the second Abe administration to explore a junior coalition partner’s strategies for policy influence and how it deals with the “unity–distinctiveness dilemma” embedded within the unequal power structure of a coalition government. Highlighting the function of “positive/negative issue associations” and “divergence/convergence of policy inclinations” in the formulation of strategies for policy influence, we presented three case studies to demonstrate how Kōmeitō employs diverging strategies not only to accommodate the senior partner’s policy demands to consolidate coalition unity, but more critically to appease its core

support base, Sōka Gakkai. We observed the compartmentalization of policy fields between the coalition partners as a strategy to establish “distinctiveness” for the junior partner without risking coalition termination.

The intra-coalition negotiations as well as the political maneuvering discussed in this study challenge the generally accepted view of the Kōmeitō—or Sōka Gakkai—as a conforming, monolithic entity. Rather, the party’s (as well as Sōka Gakkai’s) resolute stances on some political agendas indicate that the party believes its electoral performance—support from Sōka Gakkai—highly depends on the quality of policy-making. In other words, as a “political” party whose primary concern is to “win elections” (Ehrhardt 2014a, 187), the Kōmeitō faces challenges particularly in policy fields where the party’s policy inclinations diverge from those of the senior partner. The recent internal discord surrounding the issues of CSD and constitutional revision (Asayama 2017; Noguchi, Takigawa, and Kodaira 2016) suggests that Kōmeitō is likely to face tenacious challenges in the related policy fields if the LDP continues to press ahead with its policy goals. At the same time, Kōmeitō’s strategy in dealing with these controversial policy topics would be to play the “negative issue associations” to their advantage—by “sitting out” and/or “dodging” responsibilities to the senior partner.

On the other hand, this study demonstrates that the divergences in policy inclinations could become most detrimental over policy topics upon which Kōmeitō’s party identity stands—such as welfare and social security policies—if the LDP rejects its policy demands. The level of Kōmeitō’s assertiveness will be determined by the degree of pressure from the core support organization; but what is perhaps unique to the LDP–Kōmeitō partnership is that the execution of “threat,” as we observed in the case study, will most likely begin with the withdrawing of Kōmeitō’s most critical asset from the coalition framework—its electoral resources.

Notes

1. As of January, 2022, Kōmeitō had twenty-eight representatives in the upper house and thirty-two in the lower house.
2. “Junior partner” here refers to a party in a coalition with fewer number of parliamentary seats and cabinet posts under control than its “senior” counterpart.
3. The data set from The UTokyo-Asahi Survey is available at www.masaki.j.u-tokyo.ac.jp/utas/utasindex_en.html.
4. The candidates were asked to provide answers on scales from 1 (agree) to 5 (disagree). The score excluded all N/A answers.
5. Of ten Kōmeitō respondents who answered “Other” in the 2012 survey, six listed “reconstruction/rebirthing of Japan” (*nihon saiken/saisei*), “politics that cannot decide,” and “putting an end to the two-party system” each received one response. Two respondents who chose “other” did not provide any specific answer.
6. Of 134 LDP respondents who answered “Other” in the 2014 survey, 80.1 percent (108 respondents) provided economy-related policies such as economic rehabilitation/recovery (*Keizai/keiki kaifuku*).
7. There are many speculations regarding how Kōmeitō came to occupy the MLIT’s minister post during the Koizumi administration. The work of Catalinac and Motolinia (2021) seems to suggest that LDP’s concession of this important post to the junior partner may serve the “rewarding function” for the junior party’s transfer of votes during general elections, given the magnitude of MLIT’s role in the allocation of public projects and the mobilization of intermediate groups during elections.
8. Often, one Kōmeitō state minister and parliamentary vice minister each served double positions in the Cabinet Office as well.

9. Asahi Shinbun claims that the negotiation was carried out by five core members of the government, including Takamura Masahiko (vice party president of the LDP), Takamizawa Nobushige (assistant to deputy chief cabinet secretary, Ministry of Defense), Yokobatake Yūsuke (commissioner of the Cabinet Legislation Bureau), and Kanehara Nobukatsu (assistant to deputy chief cabinet secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Yokobatake Yūsuke (commissioner of the Cabinet Legislation Bureau), and Kōmeitō's Kiagawa Kazuo.
10. The other two conditions were: (2) there is no other appropriate means available to repel the attack and ensure Japan's survival and protect its people; and (3) minimum necessary force will be exercised.
11. *Jisseki Koumeitou ga shitekita koto*, www.komei.or.jp/result/story/. Accessed February 20, 2021.
12. Matsuno Hirokazu, The 193rd Upper House Committee on Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (*bunkyo Kagaku iinkai*), <https://kokkai.ndl.go.jp/simple/txt/119315104X00320170309/147>.
13. For example, refer to Ukishima Tomoko's remarks on December 1, 2017, at the 195th Lower House Committee on Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, <https://kokkai.ndl.go.jp/simple/txt/119505124X00320171201/45> and Sasaki Sayaka's on December 5, 2017, at the 195th Upper House Committee on Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, <https://kokkai.ndl.go.jp/simple/txt/119515104X00220171205/120>.

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