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The change in Japanese dual representative system caused by social media: Technological Innovation vs. Traditional Governance: Striking a balance

Abstract

This study addresses the question: How is the advancement of social networking services (SNS) affecting changes in the dual representative system of local government in Japan? It posits the following hypotheses: Social media has influenced the Japanese dual representative system in two ways: by promoting theatrical political behavior and by bringing about an agonistic democracy. The political phases can be divided into two categories: (a) theatrical political behavior (political action and direct requests) and (b) agonistic democracy in the check and balance system (Veto, Non-confidence and Provisional decision). They are evolving in response to citizens' desires for direct policy control and the emergence of *theatre democracy*. Furthermore, the current analysis suggests that the widespread use of social media has coincided with significant changes in the operation of the dual representative system and that social media has significantly influenced these changes. Agonistic democracy emphasizes conflict and discord over coordination and consensus building, viewing them as essential to democratic vitality. This perspective, when combined with the rapid dissemination of emotionally charged information, tends to facilitate theatricalized political actions and results in polarized, conformist political behavior, wherein assembly members often face pressure to engage in politically aligned action. Considering these challenges to the dual representative system, this study proposes several measures for assemblies, assembly members, and citizens to respond to the influence of social media. First, assemblies must guard against monolithic entities in the face of incentives for agonistic political action, which are facilitated by social media. They should remain aware of their role as forums for diverse opinions in which both majority and minority voices coexist. Second, individual council members should acknowledge their vulnerabilities in issue formation. Even in the face of social media-driven peer pressure, they must engage in issue formulation within the assembly as a reflection of representative democracy, developing resilience to resist pressures that favor theatrical democracy. Third, in an era where social media is pervasive, citizens must recognize the imperative to engage in rational discourse that enables informed public decision-making while scrutinizing public discourse to avoid being swept up in inflammatory rhetoric.

Keywords:

social media; technological innovation; technological governance; government

Introduction

Japan's post-war reconstruction included the creation of a local government system that remains a distinctive hybrid of imported institutions and indigenous political practices. Its core features include a broad administrative authority on a European continental model, a strong U.S.-style mayoral system with significant veto and executive powers, and local assemblies marked by weak central party affiliation, which shapes their deliberative function. This configuration, supported by substantial local budgets and a pluralistic executive structure, creates an environment conducive to assertive leadership in policy formation. Historically, this has cemented a model of **deliberative democracy**,¹ where policy is channeled through executive-initiated bills and assembly deliberation, with mechanisms for direct citizen action playing a more circumscribed—and often newsworthy—role.²

Within this local government structure, mayors and assemblies have maintained a check-and-balance relationship, often functioning within a strong mayoral-type dual representative system while harmoniously coordinating under a deliberative democracy. However, the recent development of social media seems to have a significant impact on local governments. Since the 2010s, SNS has significantly altered Japan's political landscape as follows: first, Theatrical political behavior. Chief (governor and mayor) elections are increasingly shaped by social networking services (SNS), and a significant correlation has been identified between single-issue platforms³ and chief election outcomes. In large cities

such as Tokyo, situations have arisen where over 50 candidates run for office. (See Figure 2-1.). Second, there is agonistic democracy. Within the context of a dual representative system where the mayor and assembly interact through mechanisms such as veto power, non-confidence resolutions, and provisional decisions, agonistic democracy has become more pronounced. This evolution is characterized by a clear conflict structure between the mayor and the assembly in terms of checks and balances. Third, populist policies of local governments. Examples of populist policies implemented by local governments include the provision of free high school education, reductions in city taxes, and availability of free school lunches. This paper identifies these challenges as indicative of a crisis within the democratic system and seeks to explore the underlying reasons for these theatrical operations. Therefore, it poses the following research question: How is the advancement of SNS affecting changes in the dual representative system of local government in Japan? This study posits the following hypotheses: Social media has influenced the Japanese dual representative system in two ways: by promoting theatrical political behavior and fostering an agonistic democracy. This study aims to validate and explore this hypothesis using concrete examples.

Methods

This paper will use the E-Government Development Index ('EGDI', hereafter)⁴, a representative indicator of the penetration rate of SNS, to examine the changes that the spread of SNS has brought to the dual representative system in Japan.

¹ Kei Yamamoto (2021) lists two characteristics of post-deliberative democracy: (a) it emphasizes procedural legitimacy in public debate; whereby fair decision-making is achieved through the consideration of diverse opinions. (b) it aims to make decisions through rational discussion, and considers preconceptions, strong partisanship, and emotional outbursts to be factors that should be suppressed. Kei Yamamoto, *Modern Democracy [Gendai Minshushugi]*, Chuko, 2021, p.143. Translated and summarized by the author.

² Yamamoto (2021) states, "Agonistic democracy refers to a system where competitors compete against each other in front of an audience, emphasizing conflict and discord over reconciliation and consensus, and viewing this as the vitality of democracy." Translated by the author.

³ One example is the case of Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto, also the head of the Osaka Ishin no kai (Restoration Association), who in 2014 resigned as mayor over the issue of the *Osaka Metropolis concept*, ran for re-election, and won. "Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto may run against only a Japanese Communist Party candidate in the snap election he forced by announcing his resignation Monday, while tensions between his Osaka Ishin no Kai group and its coalition partner, New Komeito, escalate over the future of his *Osaka integration plan*." (Feb. 4, 2014, *Japan Times*.)

⁴ EDGI is an indicator used by the UN to measure progress in e-government. It is a composite measure of three important dimensions of e-government: provision of online services, telecommunication connectivity and human capacity. See *UN E-Government Knowledgebase*. EGOVKB | United Nations > About > Overview > E-Government Development Index

Context

Chapter 1 provides foundational information regarding the structure of Japan’s local government system, Chapter 2 investigates the transformations within Japan’s dual representative system due to social networking services, and Chapter 3 presents the conclusions.

Framework of Japanese Local Government System

Features of Local Government

The autonomy of local governments is crucially related to intergovernmental relationships between national and local governments. The current Japanese local government system and the central-local relations have several features.

- A. The local government structure is a two-tier system. Local governments consist of 47 regional administrative entities and more than 1,700 basic local governments. (See Table 1.)

Tabel 1. Number of Local Government (March1, 2024)

Local governments		Number
Prefectures		47
Manicipalities	Ordinance-designated cities	20
	Cities	770
	Towns	743
	Villages	189

Source: Author

- B. The functional relationship between the central and local governments is of the general competence and fusion type; local governments can carry out administrative activities in a resilient manner.
- C. Personnel exchanges that secure human resources between the central and local governments have varied.
- D. The system of local autonomy is ensured through a legal framework under the post-war 1947 constitution.
- E. The size of local governments’ expenditure is remarkably large because of B above; it is larger

than that of the central government.

- F. Independent taxation has developed in the local taxation system, and there is a strong decentralized component.

Japanese Local Government Structure

Chief Executive

Framework

The organization and operational framework of local governments in Japan are governed by legislation that adheres to the principles of local autonomy, as outlined in Article 92 of the Constitution. The structure of local government executive organs is mandated to be systematically organized under the authority of the head, with each organ assigned specific responsibilities and powers (Local Autonomy Law (‘LAL’), Art.138-3, para.1). The head of the local government possesses comprehensive coordination authority over the organization and functioning of executive agencies, budget execution, and management of public assets.

Executive Branch Pluralism

A distinctive aspect of the executive branch’s organization is the decentralization of administrative authority, which is not concentrated in a single entity but rather distributed across multiple independent collegial bodies, such as committees and commissioners, established under the LAL. This framework, referred to as *executive branch pluralism*, allows the head of the local government to oversee coordination while promoting democratic governance. The adoption of the principle of executive pluralism allows education committees to manage daily administrative tasks related to school education, enabling the executive branch to focus on policy-oriented governance. This reduces the burden of daily issues faced by the mayor, enabling them to devote more time to policymaking.

Local Assembly

The assembly is composed of representatives directly elected by the populace (para.2 of the same Art.). Political groups typically form voluntarily among members who share similar perspectives, such as those associated with political parties. In prefectural

assemblies, the dynamics between political factions often resemble those between ruling and opposition parties, particularly regarding their interactions with governors. Conversely, municipal assemblies exhibit a notable distinction from both the National Diet and prefectural assemblies, with independent members comprising approximately 70 percent of the total membership, while a limited number are affiliated with central political parties (See Figure 1.).

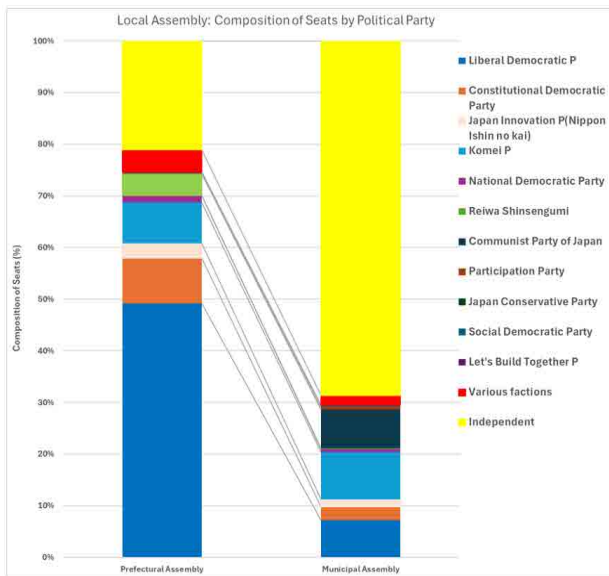


Figure 1. Local Assembly Composition of Seats (Dec.31, 2024).

Source: Author

This phenomenon arises from the smaller scale of valid votes compared to that of the prefectural assemblies, allowing candidates without party affiliation to secure sufficient electoral support through stable voter bases. The prominence of such independent figures is characteristic of municipal assemblies, complicating the articulation of regional social issues as central topics within local assemblies. Tsuji (2019)⁵ states the following: “In town and village assemblies where party politics have not developed, it becomes difficult for voters to cast their ballots based on party affiliation. Voters are likely to cast their votes based on the candidate’s hometown or occupation rather than their political party. This makes it difficult for voters to understand the actions of individual council members. ...If there are many independent council members, voters would be required to spend more effort reviewing each assembly member’s policies and positions, and it is unclear how many voters are willing to invest that level of effort.” Under such circumstances, the current situation is perceived to undermine the assemblies’ capacity to shape policy through majority formation, thereby establishing a framework for deliberative democracy in which the mayor plays a pivotal role in policymaking, with decisions reached through collaboration and compromise between the mayor and local assembly.

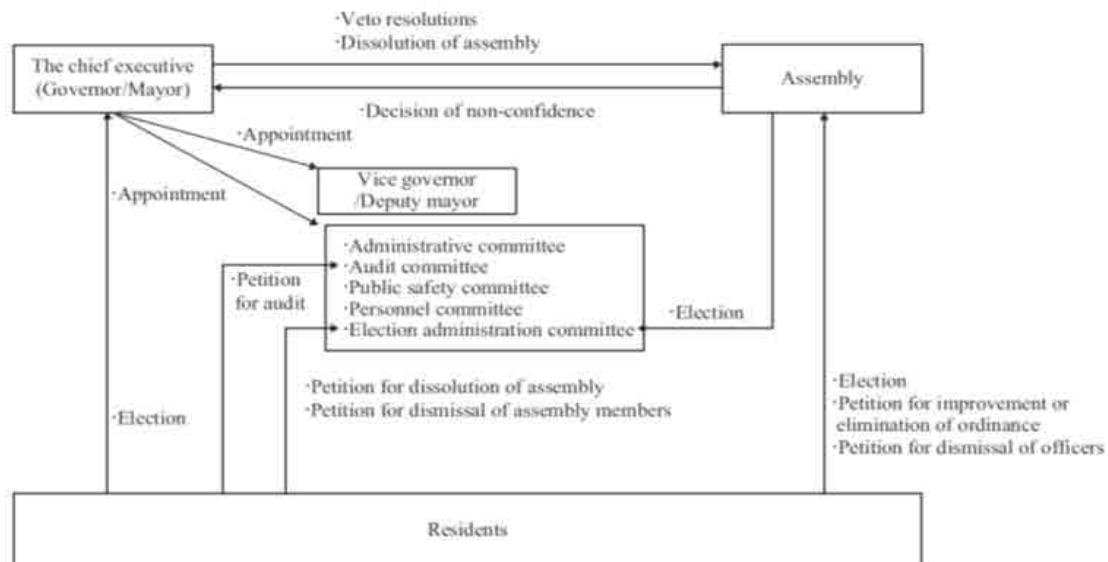


Figure 2. Organization of Local Government (March 1, 2024).

Source: Author

⁵ Source: Akira Tsuji, *Japanese local assembly [Nihon no Chiho Gikai]*, Chuko, 2019, p.133. Translated by the author.

Japanese Dual Representative System

Constitutional Guarantee

Art.93, para.2 of the Constitution of Japan stipulates the basic framework of local government organization as follows: “Art.93: The local public entities shall establish assemblies as their deliberative organs, in accordance with law. The chief executive officers of all local public entities, the members of their assemblies, and such other local officials as may be determined by ordinance shall be elected by direct popular vote within their several communities.”

The presidential system is characterized by its checks-and-balances system, which sees very clear checks built into the relationship between the chief executive and the assembly. (See Figure 2.)

Based on the characteristics of this dual representation system, control mechanisms are built into the relationship between the assembly and the chief executive officer. In other words, the assembly and the chief executive have measures available to them that enable either party to enforce checks and balances on the other.

The powers of the mayor and the council listed in Table 1-2 are functions that enable mutual checks

and balances between the two institutions under the dual representative system.

Under the dual representative system, both the mayor and assembly are given various measures to take the initiative in implementing policies. This system encourages competition between the two parties to take the initiative in implementing policies while utilizing these functions to their advantage. Simultaneously, to prevent policy stagnation in cases where the two parties reach a fundamental state of conflict, the system operates through mechanisms such as non-confidence votes and dissolution to usher in a new political situation. The mayor is granted specific powers that characterize a strong mayoral system⁶, including exclusive authority to submit the budget, veto power and discretionary decision-making authority, the power to dissolve the assembly in response to a vote of non-confidence, and the authority to convene the assembly. Each measure can have important consequences, and the fact that the mayor has both powers is an internationally unique system. Furthermore, in many local governments, while maintaining such checks and balances, decisions on important matters, such as budgets and ordinances, are made through adjustment and compromise,

Table 2. Check and Balance Measures

<p>< <i>Chief Executive (Governor / Mayor)</i> ></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(a) Right to submit bills (Including the exclusive right to submit bills on budgetary matters)(b) Attending the assembly, explaining the points of the bills and appealing the bills through Qs and As at the assembly(c) Right to convene the assembly in principle(d) Veto(e) Discretionary action by the chief executive(f) Right to dissolve the assembly <p>< <i>Assembly</i> ></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(a) Assembly resolution (Including increase and decrease budget amendment)(b) Right to submit the bills(c) Investigative authority (Especially authority under Article 100 of Local Autonomy Law)(d) Submission of a written opinion(e) Non-confidence

Source: Author

⁶ A strong mayoral system had already become established in the 1950s and 1960s. Steiner(1965) states as follows: “[T]he legislative record of most assemblies seems to indicate that the chief executive is still in a predominant position”. Kurt Steiner, *Local Government in Japan*, Stannford,1965, p.372. Noda (2025) also commented on the current state of the strong mayoral system as follows: “Under this system, the head of a local government has the authority to submit a budget, make decisions in an emergency without passing a motion through the council, request reconsideration when the council opposes a policy proposal, and oversee all administrative organizations, measures affording the head greater authority than the council (Ueda2012). Although Japan has a dual representation system, very few ordinances are enacted after council members draft policy proposals, and more than 90% of ordinances are drafted by public officials under the direction of the mayor or governor (Noda 2021).”⁰Yuu Noda, *Local Governance in Japan*, Springer, 2025,p.8.

thereby operating a deliberative democracy. (See Table 3.)

Specific measures in the dual representative system

This study briefly touches on three major aspects of the mutual accountability function between the mayor and the assembly in the dual representative system.

Veto

The chief executive has the power to veto resolutions passed by the assembly and seek their reconsideration. A general veto can be exercised by the mayor at her/his discretion when she/he objects to resolutions adopted by the assembly, revision, or abolishment of ordinances or budgets. However, if two-thirds or more of the assembly members vote in favor of the resolution, it is adopted and cannot be vetoed a second time.

Non-confidence

Non-confidence is the ultimate measure taken by the assembly. In the event of an ongoing conflict,

the Assembly may conduct a vote of non-confidence. “Normally the resolution of non-confidence is of course the assembly’s ultimate weapon to resolve its conflicts with the executive”. The vote requires a quorum of two-thirds or more of the assembly members, and the motion must receive the assent of three-fourths or more of the assembly members. If the assembly adopts a motion of non-confidence and the chief executive does not dissolve the assembly within ten days, the chief executive automatically loses his or her position. Assembly members risk dissolution, but if they successfully implement resolutions, they can have politically lethal effects on chief executives.

Provisional decision

Provisional decision can be exercised by the mayor using powers normally issued to the assembly in two instances: (1) When the assembly has not been convened and requires action on its behalf or when it fails to act on a matter requiring its attention; and, (2) When powers normally held by the assembly are exercised in accordance with prior agreement and the assembly delegates its authority in some minor matter to the mayor in order to more efficiently carry out the local government’s duties⁷.

Table 3. Assembly Resolution Terms

1. Establishing, amending or abolishing bylaws
2. Deciding budgets
3. Approving statements of accounts
4. Carrying out matters concerned with imposing or collecting local taxes and such
5. Concluding contracts (respective sums of money and such)
6. Handling the transfer of property
7. Investing property as a trust
8. Dealing with the acquisition and disposal of various kinds of property and monetary amounts
9. Receiving a donation with conditions attached
10. Dealing with the renunciation of rights
11. Making important public facilities set out for exclusive or long-term use
12. Dealing with matters raised by a local public body, including demands, expressions of dissatisfaction, proposed lawsuits, negotiated settlement, mediation, and arbitration
13. Deciding the amount of compensation for damages
14. Comprehensive adjustment of activities carried out by public entities
15. In addition to the above, all matters falling within the purview of an assembly as determined by laws or government orders based on these laws

Source: Author

⁷ The former cases are as follows: t\$ where an assembly is not duly formed; u\$ where an assembly is unable to open proceedings, particularly where there is a need for urgency and there is clearly not sufficient time to bring together the assembly; and, v\$ where an assembly does not pass a resolution on a matter on which it should pass a resolution, the chief executive can address the matter with their own authority (Art.179, para.1). In the former cases, any such provisional decision must subsequently be approved by the assembly. However, even if approval is not obtained, although the political responsibility falls on the chief executive, the validity of the discretionary action in question is not affected. This measure is very effective when urgent matters arise and the mayor has to deal with affairs swiftly.

Transformation of the Japanese Dual Representative System through Social Media

This study examines the transformations occurring within the dual representation system influenced by social media.

Characteristics of Social Media

Suzuki (2007)⁸ compares new media, such as the Internet, to old media and their relationship to the masses: “the new media, particularly digital media comprising of personal computers and the Internet, created an environment for interactive communications between the masses, unlike existing mass media that is characterized by one-way communications from one to the mass. Consequently, a massive amount of information, both true and false, is flowing on the Internet. There are sites where individuals can exchange their opinions, creating a new political trend. Such a media environment has surpassed the existing mass media, spread rapidly and extensively and become a trend without a core.”

LIPS (2020)⁹ also compares new media with old media and describes the function of new media as follows. points out the characteristics of social media as follows: “According to Mergel (2013), the terms “social media”, “social technologies”, and “social networking” are often used interchangeably to describe “web services that allow users to create an online profile and that also enable user-generated content, crowd-sourcing, and online collaboration”... The Internet and mobile technologies and devices

has created a new information and media ecology in which increasingly networked individuals operate. This information and media ecology is distinct from the past in the following ways: the dramatic growth of information: more and more information is generated and circulated at a rapid pace...”. This dramatic growth of information, when combined with citizens’ desire for direct participation in policy, has the potential to lead to theatrical politics.

Challenges Associated with Social Media

What is the impact of social media on contemporary democracies? In contemporary society, social media has a dualistic impact on democratic processes, presenting both advantages and disadvantages.

Advantages of Social Media in Relation to Democracy

The advantages of social media include the following points: rapid information dissemination¹⁰, encouragement of citizen political participation, visibility of diverse perspectives, and revitalization of grassroots movements and such.

Disadvantages of Social Media in Relation to Democracy

Conversely, several drawbacks are commonly acknowledged: propagation of misinformation¹¹, polarization of public opinion¹², selective coverage of events¹³, algorithmic bias¹⁴, information overload¹⁵ and such.

⁸ Kenji Suzuki, *Nation-States and Media*, Seikei University, 2007, p.27.

⁹ Miriam Rips, *Digital Government – Managing Public Sector Reform in the Digital Era*, Routledge, 2020, pp.175-176.

¹⁰ Social media platforms possess the capability to swiftly disseminate information that traditional media channels may inadequately convey. This immediacy facilitates greater access to information for citizens, thereby enhancing their ability to engage in informed political decision-making.

¹¹ Social media creates a conducive environment for the rapid spread of intentional falsehoods and misinformation. When political decisions are predicated on erroneous information, it threatens the very foundations of democratic governance.

¹² Social networking platforms often attract individuals with similar ideological leanings, which may exacerbate divisions in public opinion. This phenomenon can result in diminished dialogue between differing viewpoints, further entrenching societal divides.

¹³ Joyce (2020) notes that one of the problems caused by the media - selective event coverage as follows:

“A second criticism that is sometimes levelled against the media concerns the process by which events are selected for coverage. Stories that appear in our newspapers or on our television screens are chosen, not because of their importance, but by the criterion of ‘news worthiness’ applied by media owners or editors. This may mean that stories that are sensational get more media exposure at the expense of worthier events which lack such ‘glamour’. Peter Joyce, *Politics*, 2015, p.175.

¹⁴ Social media algorithms tend to tailor information based on user interests, which may confine users to a narrow spectrum of viewpoints. This has raised concerns regarding the potential reinforcement of political biases.

¹⁵ The incessant influx of information on social media can overwhelm users, resulting in information overload that diminishes their capacity to discern critical information.

Impact of Social Media on Administration

Bovaird (2024)¹⁶ describes the significance of social media as follows: “Social media have become an important new data source for governments to sense the dynamics of change in society, to inform about and collect feedback on public services and exercise control over their citizens and manipulate social sentiment. Social media have created many novel opportunities to self-organize and co-create public services (e.g. from providing real-time information during crises such as floods or earthquakes to developing peer-to-peer and self-sustaining communities).” There is no doubt that social media has brought directness to the relationship between the government/politics and citizens. The directness between politics and citizens invites more complex issues.

Impact on Local Politics

These characteristics of social media have influenced contemporary political behavior in the following ways.

Participatory Expectations

Social media with these characteristics also influences the dual representation system of local governments. The advent of social media technology has instigated significant transformations in democratic frameworks. Kersting (2003)¹⁷ articulates that “changes are also induced by the ongoing penetration of the Internet, which has led to heightened ‘participatory’ expectations by facilitating transparency and introducing innovative avenues for political communication.”

The emergence of new e-governance methods, such as electronic voting, is expected to enhance voter turnout. Furthermore, online elections are anticipated to streamline the electoral process, rendering it more accessible and cost effective. Such expenditure reductions may foster a resurgence of direct democracy. However, the realism of these expectations is

uncertain. Building on these observations, this study explores the influence of social media on political communication and, by extension, on political action.

Hasty Decision-making

Bergström (2021)¹⁸ states as follows: “News and information are disseminated in alternative ways, especially via social media. These media certainly have advantages and have been instrumental in certain democratization processes. However, there are also clear shortcomings. Social media forces politicians into hasty and sometimes unconsidered decision-making. Politicians are elected to reflect on the different available options, investigate different solutions and their consequences, and ensure that different decisions are consistent. Now, immediate action is called for, actions that may counteract earlier decisions...Fast thinking may smooth the path of politics in contemporary democracies, but it may also have a long-term corrosive effect on citizens’ attitudes to politics and their faith in the political system. Social media also establishes a new level of criticism directed at politicians, often in very harsh words. Thirty per cent of all elected members of municipal councils state that during 2018, they were the victim of harassment, threats or violence in connection with their political work as an elected representative.”¹⁸As Bergström points out, social media encourages politicians to make immediate political decisions, which may have the effect of encouraging them to choose between a conciliatory or confrontational stance toward the chief if they are in parliament, even in a system of two-party representation.

Japanese Trigger

In Japan, the integration of social media into electoral campaigns has catalyzed a robust correlation between social media use and political behavior. Following legislative amendments in 2013, which acknowledged the pervasive use of the Internet and related technologies, the use of the Internet for

¹⁶ Tony Bovaird and Elke Loeffler, *Public Management and Governance (4th edition)*, Routledge, 2024, p.147.

¹⁷ Nibert Kersting and Angelika Vetter, *Reforming Local Government in Europe*, Springer, 2003, pp.20-21.

¹⁸ Tomas Bergström, *The Future of Local Self-Government-European Trends in Autonomy, Innovations and Central-Local Relations*, palgrave macmillan, 2021, pp.26-27.

election campaigning was sanctioned during electoral periods. This initiative aimed to enhance information accessibility regarding candidates and bolster voter engagement in the political process. As stipulated in the Amended Public Offices Election Act, Art.142-3, para.1, any individual is now authorized to conduct election campaigns via websites and other methods¹⁹.

Since the enactment of this amendment, social media has emerged as a formidable source of information in political discourse, leading to the characterization of traditional media, such as newspapers and television, as “old media.” Considering these developments, this study analyzes the evolution of social media and its subsequent impact on political activities within a dual representative system, employing the United Nations’ EGDI as a metric. The EGDI serves as a composite measure encompassing three critical dimensions of e-government: the provision of online services, telecommunication connectivity, and human capacity.

Impact on Japanese Dual Representative System

This study posits that social media has influenced the Japanese dual representative system in two

ways: by promoting theatrical political behavior and by bringing about an agonistic democracy. The following sections of this paper evaluate the implications of social media, utilizing a tripartite framework consisting of political activities, direct citizen engagement, and the system’s mechanisms of checks and balances.

Theatrical political behavior

Political action

Figure 2. illustrates the variations in voter turnout, the number of candidates in the Tokyo gubernatorial election, and the EGDI.

The figure presents several key observations.

- A. Following the lifting of restrictions on Internet election campaigning in 2013, EGDI has demonstrated a consistent upward trajectory, which is believed to have catalyzed the extensive adoption of social media platforms. Concurrently, both voter turnout and the number of candidates have exhibited significant increases since the 2014 election, which immediately followed the removal of these restrictions.

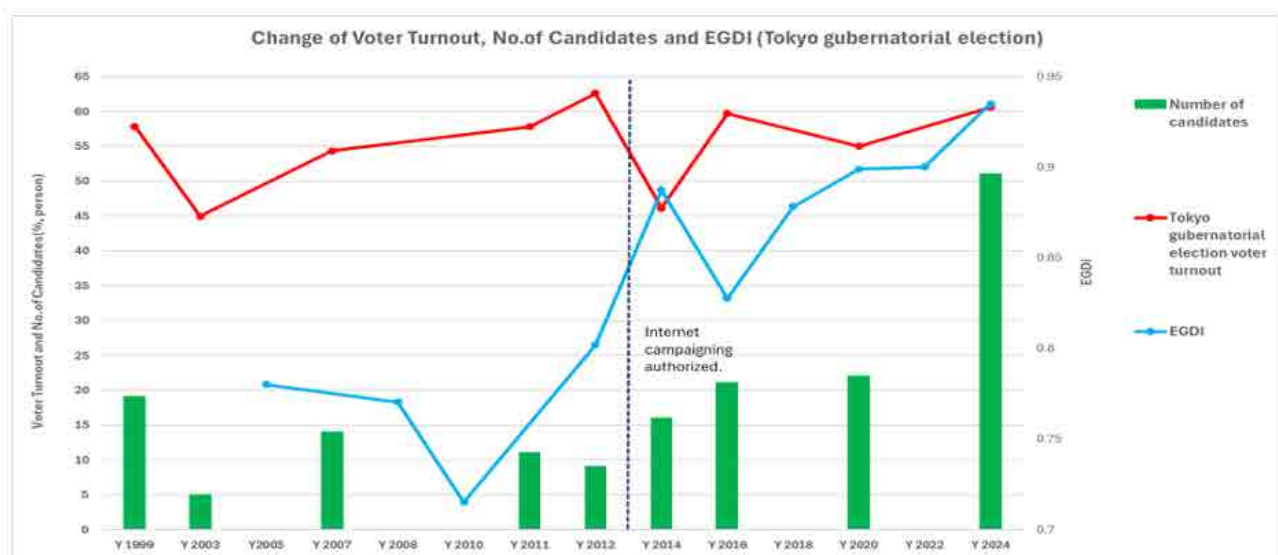


Figure 2. Change of Voter Turnout, No. of Candidates and EGDI.

Source: Author.

¹⁹ The term “methods” encompasses those that leverage the internet or similar platforms, excluding email-based methods. Examples include websites, blogs, social media (e.g., Twitter, Facebook), video-sharing services (e.g., YouTube, Nico Nico Video), and live-streaming platforms (e.g., Ustream, Nico Nico Video live broadcasts).

B. Since 2012, the number of candidates has increased with each successive election. Notably, in fiscal year 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic imposed social restrictions that limited the political activities of candidates. However, by fiscal year 2024, the number of candidates surged to an unprecedented total of 51.

These observations suggest that advancements in telecommunications infrastructure have considerably reduced the barriers to political participation for candidates. This enhancement facilitates the immediate and widespread dissemination of information during election campaigns, thereby enabling candidates to effectively solicit voter support. This trend is especially pertinent in expansive electoral districts, such as the Tokyo Metropolitan Governor election, which encompasses 9,868,000 voters as of July 2025. Moreover, these dynamics are anticipated to continue shaping candidate trends in urban areas characterized by high social media engagement. This trend can be described as the theatricalization of political action, as previously mentioned.

Direct requests for Dismissal from Citizens

The procedures for initiating dismissals are as follows:

Removal of a Mayor

Citizens who wish to initiate the removal of a mayor may do so by submitting a request to the election management committee, which necessitates the collection of signatures from no fewer than one-third of the eligible voters within the municipality (LAL Art. 81). Upon validation of the request, a referendum must be conducted within 60 days (the same article). Should the majority of valid votes cast in the referendum support the dismissal, the mayor is removed from office (LAL Art. 83).

Removal of Local Assembly Members

To seek the removal of a local assembly member, proponents must gather signatures from at least one-third of the eligible voters within the member's electoral district and submit the request to the election management committee (LAL Art. 80). If the request is validated, a referendum is required to be held within 60 days, either in the electoral district or, in the absence of such a district, across the entire area (LAL Art. 80). A majority of valid votes cast in the recall election in favor of the motion will result in the elected official losing their position (LAL Art. 83).

Figure 2-2 shows the change in the number of dismissals of mayors and assembly members and the EGDI.

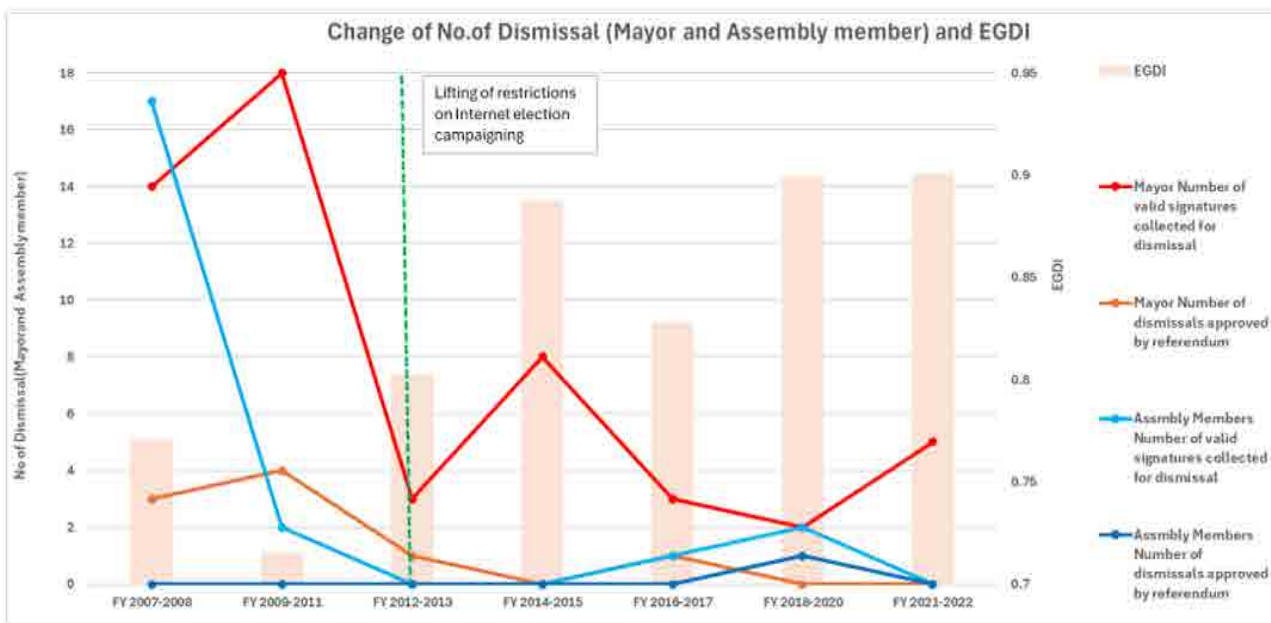


Figure 3. Change of number of dismissals of mayor and assembly member and EGDI.

Source: Author

The figure presents several noteworthy trends.

- A. EGDI has exhibited a consistent upward trajectory since 2013, which is believed to have catalyzed the comprehensive utilization of social media. Corresponding to this trend, there is evidence of an increasing number of requests featuring valid signatures seeking the mayor’s dismissal.
- B. In alignment with the trend observed in the EGDI, a slight increase was also noted in the number of requests with valid signatures aimed at the dismissal of assembly members.

As articulated in the introduction, Japan’s local administrative framework is predicated on indirect democracy, supplemented by a limited direct petition system established under the LAL. This institutional arrangement has facilitated deliberative democracy. However, as demonstrated in Figure 2-2, the observed increase in the utilization of the direct petition system provides empirical evidence supporting the notion that the Internet can enhance direct democracy.

Dismissal represents a request to remove an individual from their role as a public official or local assembly member, constituting the most significant alteration in the status of a public official. If the proliferation of social media is stimulating dismissal requests, it can be posited that the spread and evolution

of social media are influencing theatrical politics and, by extension, affecting agonistic democracy.

Agonistic democracy in the check and balance system

In these and subsequent sections, the paper will focus on the mayor within the chief executive and the data.

Veto

When the veto power is exercised, a re-vote on the original decision by a two-thirds majority of the assembly validates the original decision: *assembly’s will enforcement type*. Conversely, when there is no prospect of the revote being passed, the assembly will select one of the following three options: a) adopt a new resolution that aligns with the mayor’s intentions; b) amend the original resolution and subsequently adopt it; or c) allow the matter to remain invalid. This means that the result reflects the mayor’s intentions in part or in full: *the mayor’s will enforcement type*.⁰

Regarding the effect of veto power, Kimura (2013)²⁰ points out the following: “Veto power has not so frequently been used historically in local government, and the total number of cases is 219 between 1999 and 2011. When the chief executive uses this authority, the success rate²¹ is 46.4%. The

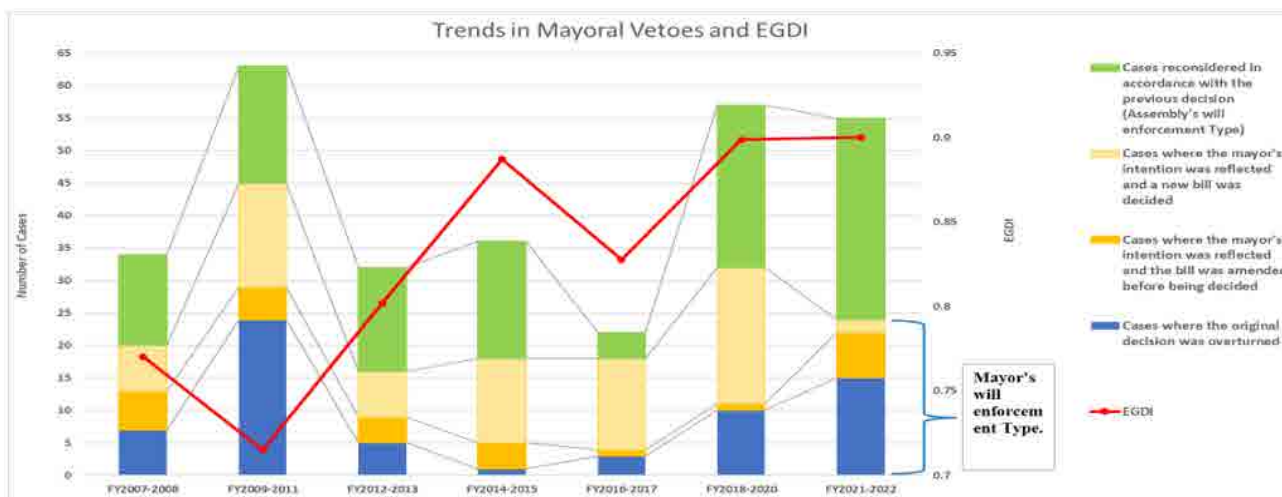


Figure 4. Trends in vetoes by mayors and EGDI.
Source: Author.

²⁰ Source; Shunsuke KIMURA, *A multilayered check-and-balance system: trend of a dual representative system in Japanese local administration*, Hitotsubashi University, 2013, pp,41- 42.

²¹ The success rate refers to the percentage of *mayor’s will enforcement type* out of the total number of cases.

chief executive can abolish or adjust the modified draft planned by the assembly. In contrast, the assembly success rate using the veto measure was 37.8%. The Assembly can keep a modified draft by approving the modified draft again following a veto, so long as it has a majority of more than two thirds. The rate of the former is bigger than the latter and so it is possible to conclude that veto power in the hands of the assembly as effective and potentially strong.”

The figure presents several key observations.

- A. Looking at the period since 2013, the number of cases in which mayors exercised their veto power has increased particularly since 2018. This trend is consistent with the upward trend in EGGIs since 2016.
- B. Since 2014, there has been a notable increase in the number of vetoes exercised, coinciding with a rising trend in both the cases of the assembly’s will enforcement type, indicating that the assembly’s preferences prevail, and the cases of the mayor’s will enforcement type, indicating that the mayor’s preferences prevail. This trend occurred without a discernible bias toward either outcome.

The figure illustrates several critical observations.

- A. Since Fiscal Year 2007, the success rate of the mayor’s veto has consistently exceeded 50 percent.

- B. A significant change was observed in the increasing number of cases since Fiscal Year 2018 (Figure 2-3). Concurrently, there has been a pronounced rise in the proportion of cases of assembly’s will enforcement. This trend aligns with the period post-Fiscal after 2018, marked by an increase in the EGDI.

This situation coincides with the rapid proliferation of social media, alongside assemblies’ tendency to counter the mayor’s veto power through re-voting. Although this data may be insufficient as standalone evidence, it implies that social media serves a monitoring role for the chief executive, thereby reinforcing the function of the assembly as veto players. In this context, the Japanese dual-representative system can be regarded as incorporating an increasingly agonistic element of democracy.

Non-confidence

Non-confidence and dissolution are the final measures and countermeasures between dual organizations. In the event of an ongoing conflict, the Assembly may conduct a vote of non-confidence. The vote requires a quorum of two-thirds or more of the assembly members, and the motion must receive the assent of three-fourths or more of the assembly members. Once a motion is issued, the members of the assembly are divided into two positions: either in

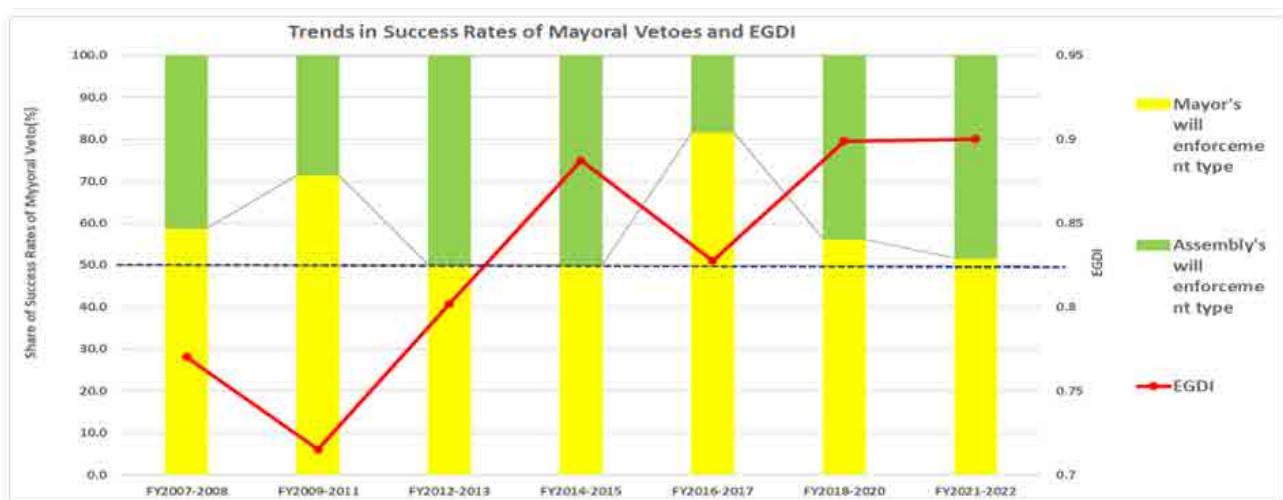


Figure 5. Trends in success rates of vetoes by mayors and EGDI.

Source: Author

²² Source; Kengo Soga, *Japanese Local Government [Nihon no Chihou Seifu]*, Chuko-shinsho, 2019, p.32. English translation by the author.

favor of the vote of non-confidence (non-confidence in the mayor) or against it (confidence in the mayor).

Soga (2019)²² states the following: “There have been few cases where a vote of non-confidence has been exercised. This is because it is not a very advantageous mechanism for assembly. First, the threshold was high. A non-confidence resolution requires the attendance of two-thirds of the assembly members and the approval of three-quarters of those present at the assembly. Second, a mayor facing a non-confidence vote can counter it by dissolving the assembly. Furthermore, a mayor who resigns or is removed from office can run in the next election. If the mayor wins again, the conflict between the assembly and the mayor remains unresolved. Unlike

in a parliamentary cabinet system, where the prime minister and cabinet are elected by the same body, the mayor and assembly members are elected in separate elections; therefore, there is no guarantee that the conflict will be resolved. Nevertheless, since the 2000s, non-confidence votes have become more common, and cases of deepening conflicts between mayors and assemblies have increased.”

Considering the above, this study focuses on the case of opposing a non-confidence motion, and the ratio of the number of votes in opposition to the total number of votes cast (“ratio of votes against” hereafter) was calculated (see Table 2-1 which shows the situation of non-confidence in municipalities in the country since 2007 in all municipalities).

Table 4. Non-confidence in municipalities

Fiscal Year	Municipality	Favour of the motion	Against the motion	Total	Share of Votes against (%)
2007	Minami-souma City	10	14	24	58.3
	Koori Town	12	6	18	33.3
	Higashi-Osaka City	38	10	48	20.8
2008	Nishio City	20	3	23	13.0
	Ise City	12	21	33	63.6
	Hannan City	7	13	20	65.0
	Gojo City	12	8	20	40.0
	Aiman City	13	9	22	40.9
	Hoshino Village	3	6	9	66.7
	Akune City	15	0	15	0.0
	Miyakojima City	7	19	26	73.1
	Zamami Village	4	3	7	42.9
	Iheya Village	3	4	7	57.1
	2009	Wakkanai City	2	20	22
Inzai City		6	1	7	14.3
Oiso Town		7	7	14	50.0
Nishio City		20	3	23	13.0
MinamiChita Twon		8	4	12	33.3
Oze City		14	2	16	12.5
Ishii Town		8	8	16	50.0
Ebino City		13	1	14	7.1
2010	Souka City	24	5	29	17.2
	Shiroi City	16	4	20	20.0
	Hayama Town	10	6	16	37.5
	Nakatsugawa City	13	17	30	56.7
	Kamiita Town	7	8	15	53.3
2011	Kamiita Town	7	8	15	53.3
	Fujisaki Town	10	3	13	23.1
2012	Natori City	8	9	17	52.9
	Oogata Village	5	7	12	58.3
	Futaba Town	5	2	7	28.6
	Futaba Town	4	4	8	50.0
	Futaba Town	8	0	8	0.0
	Yachiyo City	7	25	32	78.1
	Mikurajima Village	2	4	6	66.7
	Mikurajima Village	2	4	6	66.7
	Hasima City	5	11	16	68.8
	Iga City	4	21	25	84.0
Saijou City	21	7	28	25.0	

2013	Ikeda Town	4	8	12	66.7
	Ooyamazaki Town	6	6	12	50.0
	Kamigoori Town	11	1	12	8.3
2014	Chihibu City	5	17	22	77.3
	Minami-Shimabara City	4	16	20	80.0
	Oohira Village	12	1	13	7.7
2015	Nanae Town	5	13	18	72.2
	Fukushima Town	10	1	11	9.1
	Shimizu Town	3	10	13	76.9
	Yura Town	5	6	11	54.5
2016	Miki City	7	8	15	53.3
2017	Zushi City	5	12	17	70.6
	Kawabe Town	4	5	9	55.6
	Koura Town	6	6	12	50.0
	Dazaifu City	0	18	18	100.0
	Mashiki Town	9	9	18	50.0
2018	Minakami Town	12	6	18	33.3
	Minakami Town	13	4	17	23.5
	Asahi City	4	15	19	78.9
	Mishima City	4	18	22	81.8
	Matsuzaki Town	6	2	8	25.0
	Iga City	13	11	24	45.8
	Hikone City	17	6	23	26.1
	Yura Town	3	9	12	75.0
	Sakai City	13	33	46	71.7
Tokushima City	5	23	28	82.1	
2019	Kusatsu Town	2	9	11	81.8
	Yotsukaidou City	4	16	20	80.0
	Oze City	3	9	12	75.0
	Yura Town	8	2	10	20.0
	Uda City	10	3	13	23.1
	Motoyama Town	3	6	9	66.7
	Yakushima Town	3	10	13	76.9
Kamishima Town	5	8	13	61.5	
2020	Hashima City	9	9	18	50.0
	Ikeda City	5	14	19	73.7
	Tokushima City	11	19	30	63.3
	Doshou Town	2	10	12	83.3
2021	Shirosato Town	8	6	14	42.9
	Ichikawa City	13	25	38	65.8
	Ichikawa City	13	27	40	67.5
	Ichikawa City	15	27	42	64.3
	Ichikawa City	15	27	42	64.3
	Oshino Village	4	7	11	63.6
	Tokushima City	11	19	30	63.3
	Iki City	5	11	16	68.8
2022	Sagara Village	3	7	10	70.0
	Akiruno City	20	0	20	0.0
	Manazuru Town	6	3	9	33.3
	Funabashi Village	6	0	6	0.0
	Mitake Town	4	6	10	60.0
	Tsu City	2	30	32	93.8
	Sagara Village	3	7	10	70.0
Sagara Village	3	7	10	70.0	

Source: Author

This data was then used to calculate simple averages and average disparities in the percentage of votes cast each year. (See Figure 2-5.) This analysis aims to ascertain whether the attitudes of assembly members regarding non-confidence are characterized by dispersion or polarization, specifically whether

these attitudes are divided into two opposing extremes of approval and disapproval.

The figure illustrates several critical observations.

- A. Since FY2007, a certain number of non-confidence votes have occurred each year, and there has been

no significant change in the number of cases occurring each year before and after 2013 fiscal year.²³

B. Since fiscal year 2018, the average ratio of votes against each fiscal year has been increasing alongside the rise of the EDGI. In 2022, there were two instances where the percentage of opposition votes was zero, indicating that all members supported the non-confidence motion²⁴. These instances highlight a structure in which assembly members ultimately oppose the chief executive, exemplifying theatrical political action and the concept of agonistic democracy. Conversely, even when a no-confidence motion is proposed, the percentage of assembly members who do not necessarily support the proposal appears to increase gradually, as indicated by a simple average. These cases signify the formation of a structure where assembly members are in the clearest opposition to the chief executive, representing theatrical political action and an example of agonistic democracy. However, even when a motion of non-confidence is proposed, the percentage of assembly members who do not necessarily agree with the proposal appears to increase slightly, based on a simple average.

C. But at the same time, the average deviation in the percentage of no-confidence votes cast against peaked in FY14 and then decreased once, before rising again in FY2022.

The average deviation indicates the degree of dispersion in the percentage of votes against non-confidence motions in each fiscal year. The simple average of the percentage of votes against has increased, but this does not mean that the percentage of votes against has uniformly increased in each local assembly individually. Rather, the differences in responses between local assemblies are widening (in some cases, a majority of assembly members are against, while in other cases, a majority of assembly members are in favor). The expansion of the average deviation means that the stance of individual members of the local assembly towards non-confidence motions is not becoming more consistent, but rather that the percentage of votes against no-confidence motions is becoming more diverse in each local assembly. Depending on the individual circumstances of the local government (harmony or conflict between the chief executive and the political parties), the relationship between the chief executives and the assemblies is also diverse.

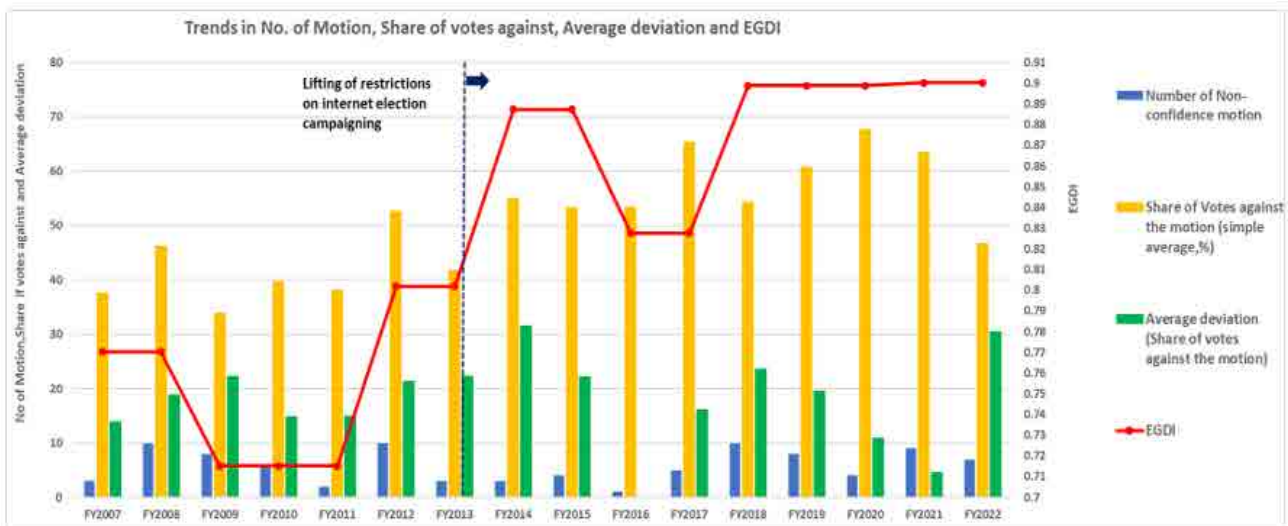


Figure 6. Trends in number of motions of non-confidence, share of votes against, average deviation and EDGI
Source: Author

²³ The average number of cases for the period 2007-2013 is 6.00. In contrast, the average number of cases for FY 2014-2022 is 5.67.

²⁴ Similarly, in September 2024, 86 council members unanimously passed a non-confidence resolution against the governor of Hyogo Prefecture. (Sep.27, 2024, Yomiuri, See Introduction.)

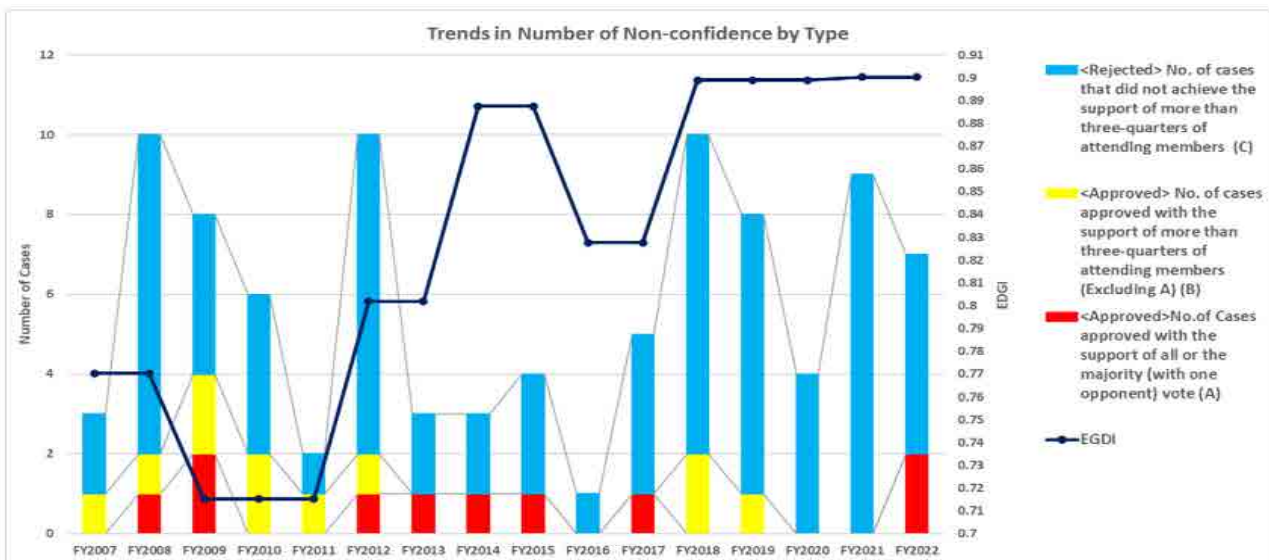


Figure 7. Trends in number of non-confidences by type and EGDI.
Source: Author

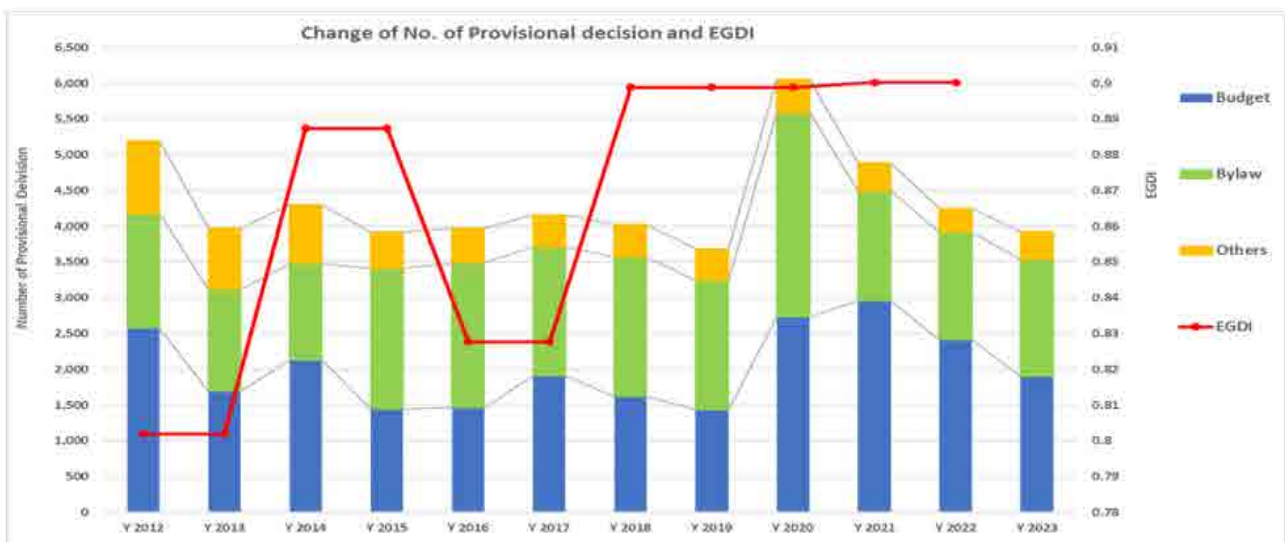


Figure 8. Change of number of provisional decision and EGDI. (Created by the Author.)
Source: Author

The figure illustrates several critical observations.

- A. Between fiscal years 2007 and 2012, numerous instances were recorded in which significant opposition arose against no-confidence proposals. In these cases, the proposals garnered over three-quarters of the votes in favor but did not achieve unanimous support, often reflecting minimal dissent (with only one opposing vote).
- B. Conversely, from fiscal year 2013 onward, two distinct response patterns have emerged: one characterized by considerable opposition and the other by overwhelming support (where either all or all but one member voted in favor).

This trend indicates polarization in the assembly's responses to no-confidence proposals. Such polarization signifies the emergence of a confrontational dynamic between the chief executive and the assembly within a dual-party representative system, which, in turn, suggests the strengthening of agonistic democracy.

4.2.3. Provisional decision

The provisional decision is an ad hoc measure, and the total number of cases has varied, with the data showing consistent or decreasing trends in its use. This measure is set up to allow the mayor to respond promptly when required.

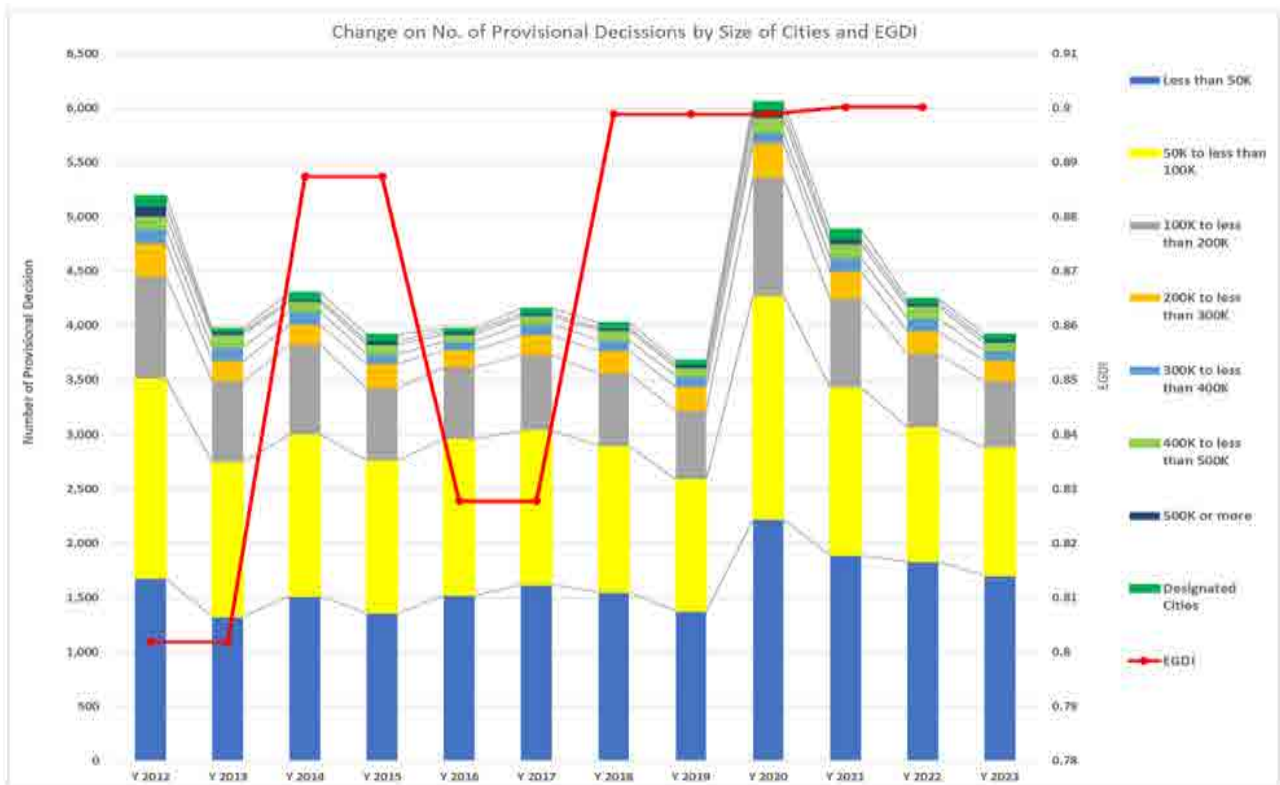


Figure 9. Trends in success rates of vetoes by mayors and EGDI.

Source: Author

The figure illustrates several critical observations.

- A. Since FY 2013, coinciding with an upward trend in the EGDI, there has been a notable increase in the utilization of provisional decisions. The COVID-19 pandemic in FY 2020 led to a surge in the overall number of provisional decisions, primarily because of the heightened demand for budgetary provisional decisions. Although there has been a gradual decline in these numbers since FY 2021, the overall count remains high.
- B. The number of ordinances enacted or amended through provisional decisions reached its zenith during the FY 2020 pandemic after FY 2012. Following this peak, there was a slight decrease, but a resurgence was observed in FY 2023.

These trends suggest a marked increase in the use of provisional decisions since 2013, indicating potential stabilization in this practice. The rise in cases following FY 2020 is attributed to the challenges in convening the assembly promptly due to the pandemic.

Over the longer term, this pattern reflects a tendency within the chief executive to prioritize

the swift implementation of policies based on their own discretion rather than engaging in deliberative processes with the assembly. Ultimately, this inclination towards expeditious policy execution by the executive, as opposed to collaborative deliberation with the assembly, may signify a strengthening of agonistic democratic elements.

The figure illustrates several critical observations.

- A. The incidence of exclusive dispositions among small- and medium-sized local governments with populations of less than 200,000 has remained constant.
- B. Notably, within small and medium-sized municipalities, the cases of exclusive dispositions by municipalities with populations less than 100,000 experienced a significant increase following the pandemic period in fiscal year 2020.

This trend persisted at a higher level in fiscal year 2021 compared to in 2019, despite a slight decline thereafter. Consequently, since the commencement of the survey period in fiscal year 2012, there has been no observable contraction in the number of

provisional decisions. Since fiscal year 2020, the prevalence of these appropriations has increased, particularly among small municipalities, partly due to the ramifications of the pandemic. In relatively small municipalities with populations of less than 100,000, the executive branch tends to exert superior power over the assembly and actively uses emergency powers in urgent situations. This highlights the vulnerability of assemblies as veto players within these relatively small entities. These observations suggest that the dynamics of agonistic democracy have not transitioned towards deliberative democracy. Rather, the elements of agonistic democracy appear to be robust.

Conclusion

This study explores the impact of SNS on the dual representative system of local government in Japan, addressing the central research question: How does the advancement of SNS influence changes within this political framework? It proposes two primary hypotheses: First, that the SNS has shaped the Japanese dual representative system by fostering theatrical political behavior; second, that it has contributed to the emergence of an agonistic democracy. The analysis categorizes political phenomena into two distinct areas: (a) theatrical political behavior, encompassing political action and direct citizen requests, and (b) agonistic democracy within the checks-and-balances framework, characterized by mechanisms such as veto power, non-confidence motions, and provisional decisions. The findings suggest that these categories are evolving in response to citizens' demands for direct policy engagement, the rise of "theatre democracy," and a more confrontational dynamic between the chief executive and the assembly, the latter being identified as a veto player. Additionally, a temporal analysis reveals correlations between these developments and trends in the EGDI. While the hypothesis that SNS advancement reinforces aspects of agonistic democracy is supported to some extent, it is not entirely conclusive yet.

The dual representative system perceives the divergence between the chief executive and the assembly as beneficial, grounded in the principles of *checks and balances*. This perspective upholds the non-oligarchic nature of policymaking as fundamental

to democratic society. However, it operates under the assumption that the assembly and the chief executive will engage in thorough deliberation, negotiating, and compromising effectively. In contrast, SNS influence may lead voters to adopt overly simplistic and emotionally charged political stances. When assemblies and chief executives succumb to this pressure, it poses a significant threat to democratic integrity. Consequently, it is imperative for assemblies, executives, and citizens to acknowledge the profound impact of SNS on political behavior.

Agonistic democracy prioritizes conflict and discord over consensus-building, viewing these elements as vital to democratic health. This framework, coupled with the rapid dissemination of emotionally charged information, tends to encourage theatricalized political actions and results in polarized, conformist behavior among political actors, with assembly members often pressured to align politically.

Considering these challenges to the dual representative system, this study proposes several recommendations for local assemblies, their members, and citizens in response to the influence of SNS. First, local assemblies must safeguard against becoming monolithic entities amid incentives for agonistic political actions driven by SNS. They should recognize their role as platforms for diverse viewpoints, ensuring that both majority and minority perspectives coexist. Second, individual assembly members must acknowledge their vulnerabilities in the formation of issues. Even in the face of social media-induced peer pressure, they should prioritize collaborative issue formulation within the assembly, embodying the principles of representative democracy and cultivating resilience to withstand pressures favoring a theatrical democracy. Third, in an age dominated by social networking services (SNS), citizens must engage in rational discourse that promotes informed public decision-making while critically scrutinizing public discourse to avoid being swept up in inflammatory rhetoric.

This study sought to analyze contemporary democracy in local politics based on the available data; however, the analysis remains incomplete, necessitating further verification through additional data collection in future research.

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