

Japanese politics and its challenges under the global pandemic: the domestic and institutional factors

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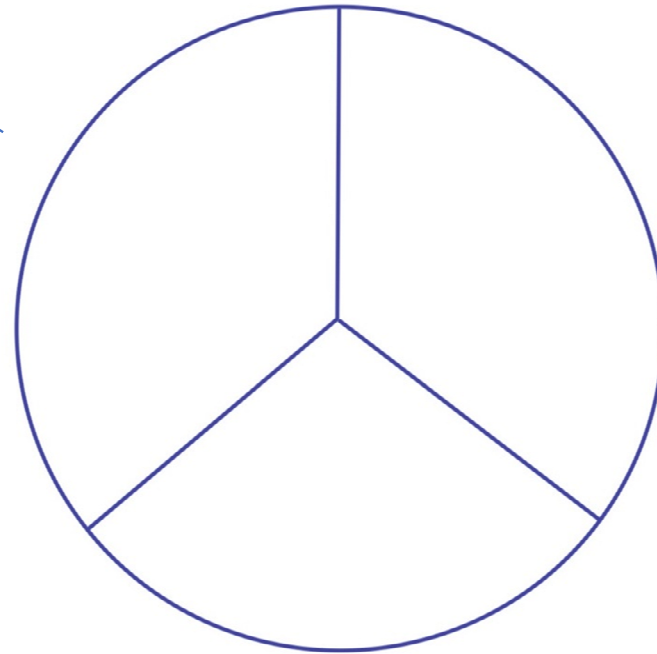
Three Essential National Policy Areas

DIPLOMACY

TPP, Indo
Pacific Initiative

ECONOMY

Abenomics



DOMESTIC AFFAIRS

Kumamoto earthquake, 2018
Flood Disaster, **Covid-19**

Japanese constitutional history and the regime changes in 2009 and 2012

The formation of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) government in 2009 was **the first time in Japan's constitutional history** that a minority opposition party won a general election and became the majority party in power.

Therefore, the formation of the Abe administration through the landslide victory of the LDP in the 2012 general election was **the second regime change** in Japan's constitutional history.

General Election in 2012 and power succession from Abe to Suga in 2020

Power transition / Power succession

The 2012 power grab marked **the first time for the LDP to win an election and go from opposition to ruling party.**

The succession of power in 2020 after the change of government in 2012 was also **a first for the LDP.**

Why did Suga inherit Abe's leadership?

Suga, the “Chief Cabinet Secretary” in Abe Cabinet was the head of the Cabinet Secretariat.

The Cabinet Secretariat is now as large as a ministry. Its head is as powerful as other ministers.

The Minister of Finance used to be the most important minister, but now the cabinet secretary has surpassed this minister.

Change of legal number of members in the governmental ministries at Kasumigaseki

	2000	2018
Cabinet Secretariat	186	1188
Ministry of Environment	724	916
Ministry of Finance	1700	1804

Organizational Changes in the LDP under the Abe Administration: Suga & Nikai

The political faction's influence has diminished.

Power was concentrated in the hands of the president and the party secretary general. In particular, party leaders have taken control of the allocation of party subsidies, which the government provides to each party.

The former Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga was supported by Secretary-General Nikai, and Suga became president, who in turn reappointed Nikai as secretary-general. A relationship of mutual support among the former Chief Cabinet Secretary and the Secretary-General has been established.

Little public support for the Suga cabinet

There is little public support for Suga's measures against new coronavirus outbreak.

Japan may appear to be succeeding because the number of infected people is low compared to Western countries, but this is because each citizen does not trust the government to protect them from themselves.

The Suga administration has failed to issue an effective message to the people, and public anger is growing.

The failures of this administration have been ongoing since the end of the Abe administration, and both of these causes are believed to be embedded in the political system. What are they?

Why does Suga keep failing?

There are issues that Japan's governance structure reform since the 1990s has not embarked on.

Compared to the Council on Economic and Fiscal Policy in economic policy, and the National Security Council and the National Security Agency in foreign and security policy, there is no control tower for policy in domestic affairs.

Why does Suga keep failing?

National policies are divided into three categories: economic, foreign, and domestic.

In the context of globalization, Japan's reforms have progressed in both the **economic and **diplomatic** spheres since 1990's.**

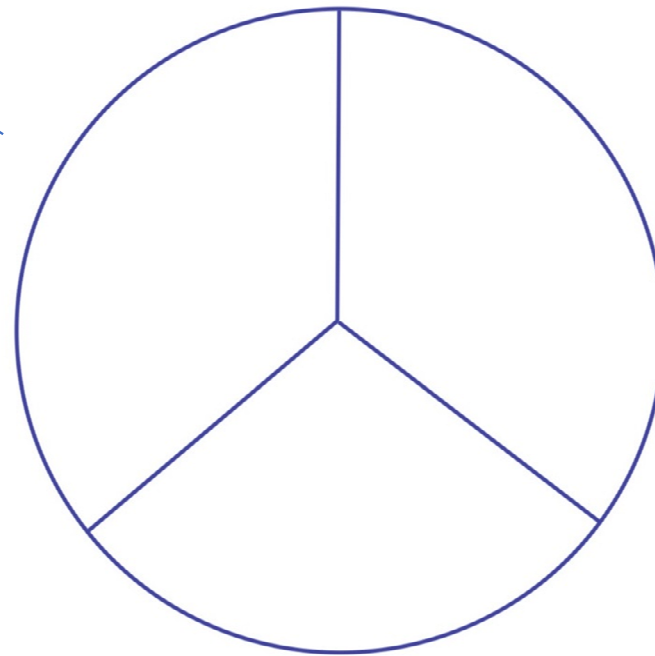
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The Predicament Faced by the Suga Cabinet

The Suga cabinet has inherited the policy framework of the Abe administration.

Countermeasures against the new coronavirus outbreak became the most important issue.

Diplomacy, which was Abe's forte, is not a high priority.

As Chief Cabinet Secretary, Suga was in control of domestic affairs and should have been able to handle new coronavirus outbreak smoothly.

However, the Suga cabinet continues to fail on this issue.

The Predicament Faced by the Suga Cabinet

The coronavirus outbreak and heavy rains in 2018 are the new complex policy agenda caused by globalization of economy and global warming.

In order to solve these new complex domestic issues, it has become necessary to create a command center to coordinate comprehensively the domestic affairs, such as infrastructure development, disaster prevention, social security, public health, and negotiation with local governments.

However, this is a very difficult task, because Japan's domestic politics are different from those of any other country

Huge population and centralization as characteristic in Japanese domestic policy

The population of Japan is 120 million, which is the 11th largest in the world.

Countries with larger populations than Japan are either in a federal system or developing countries.

In Japan, the level of education of the people is high and the evaluation of the quality of government policy is extremely strict.

These conditions result in an extremely high burden on the Japanese cabinet in making policy decisions in domestic affairs, by international standards.

China	1,439,323,776	Unitary
India	1,380,004,385	Federal
United States	331,002,651	Federal
Indonesia	273,523,615	Unitary
Pakistan	220,892,340	Federal
Brazil	212,559,417	Federal
Nigeria	206,139,589	Federal
Bangladesh	164,689,383	Unitary
Russia	145,934,462	Federal
Mexico	128,932,753	Federal
Japan	126,476,461	Unitary

Why does Suga keep failing?

In **domestic policy**, the traditional political structure was preserved.

That structure is:

- (1) **French-style** central-local relations
- (2) **German-style** principle of administrative organization law, Ressortsprinzip, which strengthens vertical division of ministries.

Why does Suga keep failing?

Due to these characteristics of the Japanese system, it is not possible to refer to the American or British models.

In addition, the establishment of the Ministry of the Interior, as in Germany and France, is a reform that goes back to the prewar era and will not gain public support.

As a result, **the coordination function in domestic politics was weak**, and each ministry took a separate approach to dealing with the situation.

Self-destructive political leadership and the absence of a "domestic policy command center" led to the collapse of the policy regime of handling Covid-19 pandemic (May 2021)

webronza.asahi.com/politics/articles/2021050600001.html

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論座 > 政治・国際 > 記事一覧 > 記事

政治・国際

自滅に向かう政治主導と「内政の司令塔」不在が招いた コロナ対策の破綻

抑えの効いた「官邸主導」と内政での「官僚主導」の再生が急務
牧原出 東京大学先端科学技術研究センター教授（政治学・行政学）

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コメント 71件

新型コロナウイルス感染症（以下「新型コロナ」）に対する政府の対策があまりにもお粗末だという声が、全国に満ち満ちている。

「第3波」を乗り越えたとして、年明けに発令した2度目の緊急事態宣言を3月に解除したのもつかの間、4月には再び宣言を発令し、5月7日には期限を5月末まで延長

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広告表示設定 ①

最新ランキング コメント（1週間）

- 「おちょやん」が不完全燃焼だったのは、浪花千栄子の執念から逃げたから
- 朝日新聞出版、毎日新聞の「架空予約」報道は「悪質な妨害愉快犯」なのか?

Need to establish the command control center in domestic affairs

National Domestic Council

--should provide a comprehensive overview of the domestic policy field.

--should be reviewed by experts, who would provide necessary advice and make the meetings open to the public, thereby increasing transparency to the public.

Concluding remarks

As a result of the reforms, Japan's political system has strengthened its coordination function in the areas of **foreign** and **economic** policy.

In the future, **Japanese government without the new reform is likely to re-enter the era of short-term administrations** as long as the difficult challenges of domestic politics persist for a long time.