

# Book Abstract

Pork to Policy: Electoral Reform and National Security in Japan, 1958-2009.

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Over the past four decades Japan experienced an extraordinary rise in its economic power and standing in the world. This rise occurred against the background of dramatic changes in its security environment. The Soviet Union rose and fell. North Korea developed ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons. China began rising. Yet for most of these decades the conservative politicians who ruled Japan seemed oblivious to the security threats Japan faced and indifferent to the opportunities arising from Japan's expanding global role. In 1996, this changed. All of a sudden, these same conservative politicians were creating leagues to tackle national security issues, seeking opportunities to make statements about national security on television, and flocking to meetings of the Liberal Democratic Party's national security sub-committee. They started getting upset about security matters they had ignored for decades, such as abductions, bases, territorial disputes, and whether nuclear weapons had been on board when U.S. vessels docked in Japanese ports. They pushed for and achieved the passage of new security policies.

On the surface, this "security inflation" appears to be a no-brainer. It coincides almost perfectly with the rise of China and the emergence of North Korea as a nuclear threat. Chapter One shows that looks are deceiving, and these new threats cannot explain the elevated status of national security in Japan after 1996. I point out that the emergence of serious security threats before 1996 elicited no new attention and no new security policies. I demonstrate that the security issues conservative politicians are paying attention to after 1996 are not those they would be paying attention to if they were worried about Japan's security. If conservative politicians were worried about the nuclear threat posed by North Korea, for example, they would not be fixated on the abduction issue and they would not be raising contentious issues with South Korea. If conservative politicians were worried about China, they would not be giving voters reasons to want the U.S. out of Japan while they "nationalize" the Senkaku Islands. What explains this security inflation?

Chapter Two argues that a shift in the electoral strategies of conservative politicians, brought about by electoral reform to Japan's Lower House in 1994, explains both the shift in attention and the

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new security policies. I explain why the new rules, combined with changes in party organization, compelled conservative politicians to switch from providing pork for sub-groups of voters in their districts to providing policies for voters across the nation. I show how the new incentives to provide policies and compete as a team reduced the costs of making security policy and facilitated the passage of new security policies. Japan's electoral reform cannot explain the content of the security policies adopted after 1996, but it can explain how these policies were able to be adopted.

I use five new data sets to make the case. In Chapter Three I test whether Japan's electoral reform was associated with a shift in candidate electoral strategies from pork to policy. I apply a new method for quantitative text analysis, latent Dirichlet allocation, to a new collection of 7,497 candidate election manifestos (senkyo koho) used by all serious candidates running for elections to the Lower House from 1986 to 2009. I explain why these manifestos are a valid and close-to-ideal indicator of candidate electoral strategy. I present evidence that electoral strategies changed in the direction predicted by the theory, and rule out the possibility that my findings can be explained by the entry of new candidates, a change in preferences of the old candidates, or changes in Japan's security environment.

In Chapter Four I test whether a similar shift from pork to policy was observable in their post-election behavior. I explain why the topics conservative politicians choose to talk about in the Japanese Diet each year are valid indicators of their policy priorities. Using all the speeches made by conservative politicians in the Japanese Diet between 1986 and 2011, I apply the same method to obtain measures of the degree to which each politician focused on national security, pork, and policy after each of the seven elections. The collection encompasses approximately a quarter of a million speeches. Preliminary results confirm that a similar shift has occurred in politicians' post-election behavior.

Chapter Five weighs up evidence for an array of alternative hypotheses. To rule out the possibility that a shift in voter priorities can explain the shift in attention, I analyze a new collection of the universe of petitions (seigan) submitted by voters to the Diet between 1987 and 2010. This collection encompasses approximately 200,000 petitions. To rule out the possibility that the economic recession can explain the shift in attention, I am applying a difference-in-difference approach to a new collection of 200 manifestos produced by candidates for municipal and prefectural elections between 1990 and 2007. These candidates are subject to similar economic conditions but used the same multi-member electoral system throughout. To rule out the possibility that a shift in media coverage can explain the shift in attention, I am analyzing the titles of all news articles that appeared in Japan's two largest national dailies between 1990 and 2005.

Chapter Six presents the results of mini case studies spelling out how the shift in attention reduced the costs of making security policy and facilitated the passage of new security policies. Using

newspaper articles, government documents, archived interviews with government officials, and the results of over one hundred interviews I conducted with political actors in Japan in 2008-9, I reconstruct the process behind the Japanese government's decision to pursue resolution of the abduction issue with North Korea, dispatch the Self Defense Force to Iraq, and pass legislation authorizing the SDF to act in the event of an emergency. I focus on these three policies because they provide nice comparisons: each was pushed by other actors prior to 1996 but torpedoed by conservative politicians unwilling to divert their attention away from pork.

Chapter Seven concludes by arguing that my findings provide a new answer to the question of why Japan never sought to acquire the military capabilities commensurate with its position as an economic superpower. It also argues that Japan's electoral reform was a necessary condition for the transformation in Japan's security policy that occurred after 1996. However we characterize this transformation, it would not have been possible in the absence of electoral reform. These findings will be of interest to policymakers in the U.S. and East Asia.

For international relations, my book contributes the idea that the rules of the game matter in unexpected ways. Most research in international relations focuses on the players and their preferences. We have work on the psychologies of leaders, the preferences of interest groups, the standard operating procedures of bureaucracies, the ideologies of political parties, the norms of societies, and the cultures of militaries. My book makes the case for setting aside the players and focusing on what outcomes the rules of the game make possible and what they make impossible. For comparative politics, my research confirms that connections between electoral systems and policy outcomes extend to national security, with one caveat. It is not only the new electoral rules that lead to new strategies and new policies. It is the new rules in conjunction with changes in party organization that lead to changes in candidate strategies, and eventually, changes in policy. Ignoring this variable, as some research does, can lead to erroneous conclusions about the kinds of policy outcomes we ought to observe.