

Catalinac, Amy. *Electoral Reform and National Security in Japan: From Pork to Foreign Policy*, Cambridge University Press, New York: NY, 2016.

Japan is the third-largest economy in the world and a key ally of the United States. In 2014, its dispute with China over the sovereignty of islands in the East China Sea made headlines around the world. Yet the determinants of Japanese security policy are not well understood. The question of why Japan never sought the independent military capabilities commensurate with its economic power has been the subject of much inquiry by scholars of international relations. Their answers have advanced our understandings of how states allied to a superpower behave, and how ideational factors influence security policy. This book argues that beneath this puzzle lies a lack of attention to national security by the conservative politicians ruling Japan. Between 1955 and 1997, these politicians paid little attention to national security. After 1997, they paid a lot more. Why?

This book demonstrates that the variables identified in previous work on Japanese security policy cannot explain this turnaround. It does this with a wealth of new data, including 7,497 Japanese-language election manifestos produced by all serious candidates competing in the eight House of Representatives elections held between 1986 and 2009 and 130,432 voter petitions submitted to the Diet in this period, as well as new tools for the quantitative analysis of text.

Curiously, the turnaround is not explained by new concerns about national security by conservative politicians or voters, brought about by, for example, the rise of China or the threat posed by North Korea. Nor is it explained by a rightward shift among conservative politicians, the entry of new conservative politicians, the retirement of conservative politicians with war memories, economic recession, new media coverage accorded security issues, or changes in the behavior of opposition politicians.

Instead, the book argues that conservative Japanese politicians began paying attention to national security in 1997 because electoral reform in 1994 compelled them to shift their electoral strategies from pork for the district to policies for the nation. It argues that the electoral strategies these politicians adopted under the old electoral system meant that the costs of paying attention to national security and changing security policy were prohibitive. It explains why their new electoral strategies make these costs *less* prohibitive. Rigorous empirical tests of six hypotheses deduced from the argument and seven categories of alternative hypotheses provide support for these claims.

The book's contributions span the sub-fields of international relations, comparative politics, and the study of contemporary Japan. For international relations, the biggest takeaway is that electoral systems influence security policy by changing the amount of attention politicians can pay to national security and the costs of changing security policy. For comparative politics, the contribution is empirical verification of a claim that underpins decades of research on electoral systems but has not yet been tested: that electoral reforms change candidate electoral strategies. For Japan, the contribution is that conservative politicians' electoral strategies are a necessary part of the explanation for why there were so few changes in Japanese security policy

prior to 1997, and so many after 1997. The book suggests that we are likely to continue observing efforts by Japanese politicians from across the political spectrum to raise and stake out positions on security issues during and between elections.