

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-19257-6 - Civic Engagement in Postwar Japan: The Revival of a Defeated Society

Rieko Kage

Excerpt

[More information](#)

I

Introduction

OVERVIEW

War destroys. It claims lives, it damages economic and physical infrastructure, and it reduces opportunities for educational advancement. If a country is defeated, the citizenry inevitably is left traumatized as well. These are hardly conditions that would seem conducive to a growth and enrichment of civic engagement.

This book, however, finds considerable evidence that civic engagement rose dramatically in Japan after World War II and some initial evidence that it also rose in many other war-affected countries during the same period. The rise of civic engagement in Japan also notably predated the country's postwar economic takeoff. How could this be? This book seeks to explain the causes of the postwar growth in civic engagement. A standard explanation points to U.S. occupation policies, which democratized the Japanese regime and introduced freedom of association. But this explanation is inadequate; although the occupation regime removed barriers to civic engagement, it hardly forced Japanese citizens to participate in organizations. The civic space opened up by the occupation had to be filled by the citizens themselves.

The study proceeds in three steps. First, it documents the postwar surge in Japan's voluntary participation. Second, it takes a step back and offers a general theory of the growth in civic engagement in the wake of wars. Third, it tests the theory using both quantitative analyses of data from Japan and twelve other developed countries, as well as qualitative analyses of specific local associations in Japan.

The theory focuses on two independent variables: wartime mobilization and legacies of prewar associational activities. First, wartime mobilization lays the groundwork for postwar civic engagement by instilling civic skills in the citizens, which they can transfer to new contexts if the postwar political regime permits it. Second, path-dependency effects from the prewar structures of participation influence the availability of actual opportunities for civic engagement by shaping the costs of association-building and information-gathering.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-19257-6 - Civic Engagement in Postwar Japan: The Revival of a Defeated Society

Rieko Kage

Excerpt

[More information](#)

Thus, the postwar growth in civic engagement should be fastest in extensively mobilized regions where prewar levels of associational activities had been high, and slower otherwise.

This study also brings a new perspective to the recent debate over whether and why there has been a rise in the number of individuals who “bowl alone” in many societies. On the one hand, scholars primarily studying the U.S. case, such as Robert Putnam, argue that the gradual passing of the “long civic generation” that came of age around the time of World War II has produced a recent decline in civic engagement (e.g., Putnam 1995a, 1995b, 2000). On the other hand, scholars primarily studying certain Western European countries such as Belgium, Denmark, and the Netherlands have argued that more recent generations are no less willing to engage than their predecessors were (Hooghe 2003; de Hart and Dekker 1999; Torpe 2003).¹ The present study advances a framework that simultaneously accounts for *both* the existence of the “long civic generation” in some countries, like the United States, that were significantly mobilized in World War II, and the lack of such a phenomenon in others, such as Belgium, Denmark, and the Netherlands, which were much less extensively mobilized.

The theory offered in the book speaks to contemporary policy issues as well. Wars aiming at “regime change” have recently acquired a bad name, but the fact remains that war has served as a major catalyst for democratization over the past decades. According to Nancy Bermeo, more than half of all democracies that were founded after 1945 and are still in existence today emerged during or in the immediate aftermath of war (Bermeo 2003: 159; see also Bermeo 2007). So when does war promote democratization and when does it not? Examining war’s effects on civic engagement can help us to begin to answer this question. Many studies have shown that a vibrant civic life is crucial not only for “making democracy work” but also for “making democracy” in the first place (Almond and Verba 1963; Inglehart 1988; Putnam 1993; Diamond 1999). By studying the effects of war on civil society, this book thus illuminates some key conditions for successful democratic transition.

THE EFFECTS OF WAR

Writers and novelists have long recognized the vast and far-reaching consequences of war on societies and have sought to capture their devastating effects in their many manifestations. It is not a coincidence that the twentieth century, the bloodiest century in human history, also gave rise to such literary explorations on the effects of war as *The Sun Also Rises* and *Tender is the Night*.

Many of the social science disciplines have also long understood the importance of the question of how wars may impact societies. There exists, for instance, a long-standing debate in the field of sociology as to whether

¹ Hall (1999) also finds no decline in association memberships in Britain over the last few decades, although he does find evidence of some decline in levels of social trust.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-19257-6 - Civic Engagement in Postwar Japan: The Revival of a Defeated Society

Rieko Kage

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Introduction*

3

conflict with outside powers increases social cohesion within. In his classic study, *Suicide*, Emile Durkheim (1951) argued that war lowers the level of social anomie and thereby enhances social cohesion; others have claimed that wars may also fragment societies, depending on how the costs of waging war, whether financial or otherwise, are distributed across different segments of society (Stein 1980; Stohl 1980). Sociologists and historians have also found that periods immediately following wars are often characterized by a frenzy of activity, including higher rates of marriage, divorce, childbearing, violent crimes, and minority activism, regardless of whether the society was victorious or vanquished (Archer and Gartner 1984; Brandes 1950; Ember and Ember 1994; Jacobson 1959; Rodgers and Thornton 1985; South 1985; Wynn 1971). More recently, sociologists, psychologists, and psychiatrists have spawned a large body of work on the relationship between wartime experiences, post-traumatic stress disorder, and postwar social problems (e.g., Kulka et al. 1990; Norris 1992; Bracken et al. 1995; Parker 1996).

The literature on the effects of war on the state has also flourished. Political scientists and sociologists have built a large and thriving body of work examining the impact of war on state-building (Tilly 1975; Skocpol 1979; Centeno 1997; Ertman 1997; Herbst 2000) and the rise of the welfare state (Kaufman 1983; Skocpol 1992), as well as on levels of state extraction and expenditures (Rasler and Thompson 1985; Levi 1988; Fujihira 2003). A number of political scientists have also explored the effects of war on public opinion, especially on presidential approval ratings (Mueller 1970; Kernell 1978; Jentleson 1992; Lian and Oneal 1993; Baker and Oneal 2001), and, more recently, public support for war itself (Goldsmith et al. 2005; Berinsky 2007).

But political scientists have largely neglected the question of how wars may impact the long-term well-being of societies. Some political scientists have begun to investigate the long-term consequences of war on public health (e.g., Ghobarah et al. 2003). Theda Skocpol and her associates have conducted path-breaking work on the effects of war on civic engagement (Skocpol 1999, 2000; Crowley and Skocpol 2001; Skocpol et al. 2002). This important research will be discussed extensively in the next section. But how the processes and outcomes of war affect the various facets of social life is a major issue that deserves much more focused attention from political scientists because, after all, as Arthur Stein notes, war is a public policy (Stein 1980: 1). A better understanding of the effects of this public policy should yield important insights for both political scientists and policymakers in thinking about how war-torn societies may be rebuilt and, indeed, whether to go to war in the first place.

By examining the impact of war on civic engagement, then, this study seeks to fill an important gap in political science research.

VICTORY, DEFEAT, AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Civic engagement is a crucial component of social capital, which in turn produces an assortment of beneficial social outcomes, from higher rates of economic

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-19257-6 - Civic Engagement in Postwar Japan: The Revival of a Defeated Society

Rieko Kage

Excerpt

[More information](#)

growth (Fukuyama 1995) to improved political performance (Putnam 1993) and even better health and longer life expectancy (Putnam 2000; Rose 2000). These are undoubtedly important concerns for countries in times of peace, but they should be particularly pressing issues for societies seeking to recover from war and its various forms of damages. Precisely for this reason, international efforts at peace-building and reconstruction have devoted a substantial amount of resources to the strengthening of indigenous civil societies in recent years (Belloni 2001; Azimi et al. 2003).

Some existing studies do offer insights into the issue of how war may affect the long-term levels of participation of the affected cohorts. Theda Skocpol and her associates in the Harvard University Civic Engagement Project (Skocpol 1999, 2000; Crowley and Skocpol 2001; Skocpol et al. 2002) draw on previously unavailable data on participation in membership associations in the United States to argue that major wars have historically served as the single most important catalyst for discontinuous jumps in levels of civic engagement in the United States (Skocpol 1999; Crowley and Skocpol 2001; Skocpol et al. 2002). To explain this phenomenon, the Skocpol group invokes what can be termed the “victory/defeat hypothesis.” This hypothesis suggests that defeat should produce a decrease in participation, whereas victory should lead to no fall, and perhaps even an increase.

Scholars have offered at least three reasons for this “victory/defeat hypothesis.” First, wartime defeat is often accompanied by extensive physical destruction, which leads to economic downturn and, by implication, a loss of incomes. Second, war, especially when it becomes prolonged, is likely to interrupt formal educational opportunities. As numerous studies have shown, income and education strongly affect an individual’s level of participation (Verba et al. 1995; Brehm and Rahn 1997; Hall 1999; Oliver 2000). Of course, victorious countries may also see declines in incomes and diminished educational opportunities, but their recovery is likely to be faster and the extent of their losses much less severe compared to defeated countries. Victorious countries may also be able to compensate for the loss of formal educational opportunities through an equivalent of the U.S. G.I. Bill (Mettler 2005). But such a luxury is usually not an option for defeated societies, at least not in the short term. In defeated societies, then, education interrupted is likely to become education terminated, with severe long-term consequences for voluntary participation.

Third, the effects of defeat may also be psychological. Here, Skocpol and her associates have offered the most systematic formulation to date. The reasoning behind this argument is one of social learning. Skocpol et al. begin from the premise that major wars, particularly those of the modern era, have generally caused the extensive mobilization of civilians into the war effort. Modern wars have typically been fought via joint action by state and society – that is, through what Peter Evans (1997) has termed “state–society synergy.” If a country is victorious in war, the argument goes, citizens find that their participation on the “home front,” or what might be termed “involuntary civic participation,” yielded real and tangible results, and, they are in turn likely to

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-19257-6 - Civic Engagement in Postwar Japan: The Revival of a Defeated Society

Rieko Kage

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Introduction*

5

feel encouraged to continue to participate voluntarily after the war. Defeat in war, in contrast, is likely to lead citizens to believe that their participation had been futile and therefore to withdraw from public life altogether once the war is over. “After victory in war,” Skocpol et al. contend, “former combatants may have renewed energy and will to cooperate with their allies and friends. But groups that mobilize and then suffer defeat may well dissolve and fragment, as participants downplay their unsuccessfully realized identity” (Skocpol et al. 2002: 140).²

EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

How well are these claims borne out by the empirical evidence? To what extent and how does war affect postwar levels of civic engagement? The fact is that, thus far, we have very little information. To date, only Skocpol’s Civic Engagement Project has collected any systematic empirical data on this question, and we thus only have reliable evidence from the United States. While data from the United States are valuable in their own right, generalizing on the relationship between war and civic engagement on the basis of the American case alone may be problematic, for several reasons. To begin with, it is just one case. Second, the United States lacks a clear-cut case of defeat in a major war. The Skocpol group invokes the U.S. South in the wake of the Civil War as a case of defeat, but the repercussions of defeat in *civil* wars may be quite different from those in *international* wars. In particular, civil wars may in general be much more disruptive to the social fabric of the defeated side than international wars. Third, the United States may also constitute an outlier within the class of victorious countries in World Wars I and II. Mainland United States has hardly ever faced invasion by a foreign power, which sets it apart from most other countries. In short, at the very least, the U.S. case needs to be compared against other country-cases.

This book presents data from a broader range of cases, both inter- and intranational. The data challenge the victory/defeat hypothesis. First, national-level data from Japan show that after its complete defeat, levels of civic engagement actually rose compared to prewar levels. Second, regional-level data from Japan reveal substantial *variation* in the growth of civic engagement across its forty-six prefectures. And third, the study provides data on the long-term impact of war on civic engagement in thirteen countries that suggest that the

² The Skocpol group also points to the *manner* in which war is conducted as a second variable to explain the rise or the fall of civic engagement following major wars (Skocpol et al. 2002: esp. 139–141). Specifically, they argue that the state–society synergy that evolves over the course of conducting war often presents an important opportunity for citizens to learn to cooperate with one another. However, in arguing that participation dwindled in the South following the Civil War and increased in the United States following World Wars I and II and also in the North after the Civil War, much of the explanation seems to fall on the victory/defeat variable.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-19257-6 - Civic Engagement in Postwar Japan: The Revival of a Defeated Society

Rieko Kage

Excerpt

[More information](#)

overall war-induced growth in levels of participation was not specific to the case of Japan.

The striking empirical puzzle with which this study grapples – the rise of Japanese civic engagement in the immediate aftermath of World War II – has long been “known” in scholarly folk wisdom.³ But this study is the first to offer systematic evidence that demonstrates the extent of the postwar Japanese civic engagement boom across a diverse array of membership associations, including youth groups, recreational organizations, women’s associations, social service organizations, and religious groups. The data were assembled through extensive fieldwork that drew on archival records of the Allied occupation of Japan; prewar Japanese government documents; the archives of various Japanese voluntary associations themselves; and available secondary resources.

OVERVIEW OF THE ARGUMENT

If it is indeed the case that civic engagement may rise in the wake of wars, the next task is to offer a new theory to explain the relationship between war, on the one hand, and civic engagement, on the other. Why, contrary to the expectations of existing perspectives, should civic engagement rise, even in cases of devastating and total defeat, as in post-World War II Japan? And what explains the *variations* in this rise across different countries and subnational regions? The study advances a two-step framework that pays greater attention to the effects of citizens’ accumulated experiences. Specifically, it focuses on two independent variables: 1) wartime mobilization, and 2) legacies of prewar voluntary activities. First, wartime mobilization drives the overall rise in levels of civic engagement in the wake of wars by instilling important civic skills into the citizenry. Second, path-dependency effects from the prewar structures of participation account for the variations in the *extent* of this growth.

Wartime Mobilization

The experience of war, whether it ends in victory or defeat, is more than just a story of lost incomes, educational opportunities, or psychological devastation. Charles Tilly (1975: 42) noted, “War made the state and state made war,” and as numerous scholars have argued, wars generally strengthen state capacities (Skocpol 1992; Rasler and Thompson 1985). But wars can also strengthen society as well. As new wartime needs, both military and civilian, multiply, the state becomes increasingly incapable of providing all of the needed services on its own. The resources necessary to wage war must be mobilized and extracted from society, and this actually deepens the state’s dependence on society (Tilly 2004: 65). As Stein and Russett (1980: 402) suggested, “Many of the domestic effects of war are indeed a function of the extent of wartime mobilization.”

³ Drawing on extensive historical data, Tsujinaka (2002), for instance, has documented the explosion of the number of associations in Japan in the wake of World War II.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-19257-6 - Civic Engagement in Postwar Japan: The Revival of a Defeated Society

Rieko Kage

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Introduction*

7

At the micro-level, this means that mobilized citizens, on both the war front and the home front, come to assume increasingly large public responsibilities. They come into contact with individuals, officials, and groups that they would not have encountered otherwise, and in so doing they may acquire important communication skills, political and social awareness, organizational savvy, or, in short, what scholars have termed “civic skills” (Verba et al. 1995). War, then, may provide vast opportunities for social learning and create a large pool of citizens who are both willing and able to engage in collective endeavors.

Freshly equipped with the skills for participation, these citizens should be well prepared to continue to participate voluntarily in collective activities of their choice once the war is over, whether that war ended in victory or defeat. Indeed, the rise of social movements in the United States such as the civil rights movement or the women’s movement during the 1950s and 1960s has often been attributed to experiences of mobilization during World War II (McAdam 1982; Freeman 1972). Former draftees have also been found to participate at higher rates than non-draftees (Jennings and Markus 1976). These phenomena have generally been viewed to support the victory/defeat hypothesis, but only because the United States happens to have been a victorious country. In fact, this study argues that the same phenomena can be observed in defeated countries as well.

Path-Dependency Effects

Wartime mobilization, then, should generally produce growth in civic engagement in the wake of wars. Mobilization, however, does not fully account for the *extent* of participation growth. The accumulation of civic skills per se does not guarantee that citizens will continue to voluntarily exercise those skills once war – or mobilization – is over. The extent to which these citizens actually participate in voluntary associations after wars depends crucially on the postwar social context, specifically the availability of opportunities. The availability of such opportunities, in turn, is shaped by the legacies of prewar associational activities.

Organizational legacies affect the availability of opportunities for participation once the war is over, in two ways. First, where voluntary associations had flourished before the war, the organizational apparatus of those associations is likely to have at least partly survived, even if the associations themselves had ceased to operate during the war. Citizens seeking groups in which to participate may easily join those revived organizations. In contrast, where levels of associational activity had been low before the war, fewer associations are likely to have survived. With a smaller heritage of associations, citizens seeking to participate must often organize their own associations. As Paul Pierson (2004: 33) argues, however, the start-up costs for associations are considerable, and these barriers to entry are likely to impede the participation of many civic-minded citizens.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-19257-6 - Civic Engagement in Postwar Japan: The Revival of a Defeated Society

Rieko Kage

Excerpt

[More information](#)

Second, even if preexisting organizations have been revived or new ones have been founded, information on them must also be available to the citizens in order for participation to occur. This kind of information is likely to be available in greater abundance in societies where levels of participation had been high prior to the war. In areas or regions that had exhibited high levels of voluntary activities before the war, citizens seeking opportunities to participate in the wake of war are likely to know larger numbers of people who used to be members of voluntary associations before the war, who may provide them with information on the rebirth of associations or even with personal contacts at the organization. This should significantly facilitate postwar participation. In areas that had exhibited lower levels of participation, in contrast, the task of information-gathering should pose a much greater challenge.

Thus, while agreeing with Putnam's (1993) view that path-dependency effects exert a significant impact over cross-regional patterns in participatory behavior, this study suggests that those effects may operate in a slightly different fashion from those envisaged by Putnam. In *Making Democracy Work*, Putnam argued that path-dependency effects should shape the participatory behavior of citizens even over a period of centuries because social norms of reciprocity and the threat of sanctions ensured that, once in place, cooperation would persist. The insight of the present study is that citizens' behavior may be more malleable than Putnam suggests, at least for absolute levels of participation. Social learning via mobilization may enable citizens to overcome the weight of the past. At the same time, the mediating effects of prewar legacies may exacerbate the *relative* differences in levels of participation across different societies.

Between State and Society

In emphasizing the effects of wartime mobilization on the postwar growth of civic engagement, this study also highlights the role of the state in shaping civil society. This emphasis on the effect of state policies over civil society follows recent studies by Levy (1999), Skocpol (2000), and Schwartz and Pharr (2003), which have argued against Putnam's (1993, 1995b, 2000) primarily societal-based account for the patterns and changes in civil society. The state and its policies may crucially influence the subsequent configuration of civil society, sometimes inadvertently. However, this book also points to the effects of path-dependency, that the impact of the state is constrained by the social context in which it operates. That is, the state may influence society, but within limits that are imposed by the preexisting configuration of society. In this way, the book seeks to strike a more nuanced balance between the society-centric and state-centric perspectives.

This view that the state may strengthen and empower civil society in significant ways (and vice versa) also challenges the conventional view that the relationship between state and society is inherently zero-sum. Scholars such as Peter Drucker and Everett Carl Ladd have argued that an expansion in the

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-19257-6 - Civic Engagement in Postwar Japan: The Revival of a Defeated Society

Rieko Kage

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Introduction*

9

role of the state invariably crowds out the voluntary sector (Drucker 1993: 9; Ladd 1999). Even Alexis de Tocqueville, to some degree, subscribed to this view: “The more [government] puts itself in place of associations, the more particular persons, losing the idea of associating with each other, will need it to come to their aid; these are causes and effects that generate each other without rest” (Tocqueville 2000: 491). From this perspective, the ideal way to promote voluntary activities would be for the state, to the extent possible, to retreat from the private sphere. The findings from this study, however, suggest that state capacities and societal capacities may expand in tandem. Indeed, the insight that the state may empower societies by equipping them with crucial civic skills echoes some of the recent studies on human capital in the field of political economy (e.g., Iversen and Stephens 2008). Not only may the relationship between state and society be “synergistic,” in the sense that “active government and mobilized communities may enhance each other” (Evans 1997: 178); this study suggests that the effects of this synergy may persist long after mobilization is over.

It should be stressed here that while this study points to the crucial effects of mobilization on subsequent levels of civic engagement, it by no means intends to endorse either war or military mobilization at a normative level. The empirical question of how mobilization affects citizens’ levels of participation is entirely separate from the normative issue of whether such mobilization is in fact desirable. To the extent that the hypothesis advanced in this study is valid, that mobilization yields positive benefits for postwar participation, it does not necessarily mean that societies *should* mobilize, and much less that they should mobilize for war. The normative question is also an important one, but one that the author of the present book is not qualified to address. It is an issue better left to political theorists and philosophers. The book will return to this point in the concluding chapter.

EMPIRICAL TESTING AND CASE SELECTION

The theoretical framework presented in this study will be tested in three steps. First, the study assembles data and conducts quantitative analyses of the combined effects of path-dependency and wartime mobilization on the postwar rise in civic engagement in forty-six Japanese prefectures. Second, it process-traces the postwar growth in participation through in-depth comparative case studies of the Japanese YMCA and Japanese judo in two cities respectively. The case studies complement the quantitative analyses in important ways because they are well suited for illuminating the precise pathways through which civic engagement rose in the wake of the war. Third, to test the broader applicability of the framework presented in this project beyond simply the Japanese context, the study conducts quantitative tests of the long-run impact of World War II on levels of civic engagement in thirteen industrialized countries.

For purposes of assessing the impact of war on civic engagement, Japan in the wake of World War II represents a particularly important case.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-19257-6 - Civic Engagement in Postwar Japan: The Revival of a Defeated Society

Rieko Kage

Excerpt

[More information](#)

Specifically, Japan immediately after World War II exhibited a confluence of factors that would lead one to expect a particularly good fit with the victory/defeat hypothesis: high levels of destruction, unconditional surrender, and relatively slow economic recovery. The extensive damage that Japan incurred should have led to a severe weakening of the social fabric, and the unconditional surrender of the Japanese regime should have led to a complete loss of faith in the nation's collective potential. These factors, in turn, should have led to a marked decline in civic activities. Thus, if the victory/defeat perspective should apply anywhere, it should apply to post-World War II Japan.

World War II was the bloodiest war in human history, claiming an estimated 61 million military and civilian deaths around the world (Sivard 1986), roughly double the number of casualties from World War I. Moreover, World War II was especially notable in the extent of civilian damage; according to one estimate, 67 percent of all casualties in World War II were civilians, compared to only 5 percent in World War I (Goralski 1981). And Japan's damage from World War II was among the most extensive of belligerent countries. Casualty figures from World War II continue to be contested to this day, but Table 1.1 provides a sense of the relative levels of casualties across the major belligerent countries.

As shown in Table 1.1, Japan lost almost 1.8 million soldiers and more than 600,000 civilians in the war (Ellis 1993: 253), or the equivalent of almost 4 percent of the population. Close to 300,000 more were wounded or missing (Ellis 1993: 253). Among the major powers, Japan's level of human casualties is third only to the Soviet Union and Germany (Ellis 1993: 253).

Japan also incurred extensive physical damage. As shown in Table 1.2, almost 2.3 million private homes, or 65 percent of all residences, were destroyed, by far the most among the belligerent countries, except perhaps the Soviet Union, for which data are not available. The exceedingly high level of property damage probably owes to the fact that most residential housing in Japan during this period was built from wood, thereby making it much more vulnerable to fire raids than in European countries, where housing is generally built from less flammable material. More than eight times as many private homes were destroyed in Japan as in Germany, and almost ten times as many as in France (Goralski 1981: 427). An additional 1.3 million private homes were damaged. Loss of property amounted to 65.3 billion yen (calculated on the basis of prices as of August 15, 1945; Akimoto 1974).

This high level of physical destruction also caused enormous social disruptions. Roughly 9 million people in Japan are said to have been homeless at the end of the war (Dower 1999: 47–48). According to estimates by the Japanese government, Tokyo Prefecture's population fell by more than half between 1944 and 1945, from 7.2 million to 3.5 million people (Somusho, n.d.[1]). Since the number of deaths from fire raids has been estimated to be roughly around 100,000, most of the loss of population in Tokyo has been attributed to people fleeing to the countryside to avoid the fire raids, especially after March 1945, when the most extensive attacks on Tokyo occurred, than