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Introduction

In October 2012, the Japanese media covered a debate within the Japan Restoration Party. In a forum to unveil the new party's policies to voters, party leader and Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto offered his thoughts on the dispute between Japan and South Korea over sovereignty of the islands known as Takeshima in Japanese and Dokdo in Korean. Acknowledging the impossibility of overturning South Korea's occupation of the islands with force, Hashimoto proposed that Japan change its policy to a more practical one: joint management of the islands with its neighbor (*Yomiuri Shimbun* 2012). No sooner had he spoken than his words met with a barrage of criticism from fellow party members. Former Liberal Democratic Member of the House of Representatives Kenta Matsunami asked him to "leave decisions about national-level policies like foreign and security policy up to the Diet Members in the party," which prompted Hashimoto to clarify that he was not suggesting Japan *rescind* its claims to sovereignty of the islands, only that it work with South Korea to establish rules for the joint utilization of the area and its resources. Another former Liberal Democratic Member of the House of Representatives, Kenzo Yoneda, counseled Hashimoto against further efforts to resolve the dispute, warning that "national security and territorial disputes are the lifeblood of politicians these days" (*Sankei Shimbun* 2012).

Yoneda's remarks are telling because they overturn a conventional wisdom about Japan, which is that conservative politicians do not pay much attention to national security and are not very interested in making security policy. Scholars of international relations and observers of recent episodes of tension between Japan and China over islands in the East China Sea might find this difficult to believe, but for decades, it was true. The conservative politicians who governed Japan as members of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) acted as if they were oblivious to the security threats Japan faced and indifferent to the opportunities arising from the extraordinary expansion of Japan's economic

power and standing in the world. In 1997, this changed. All of a sudden, these same conservative politicians were rushing to create Diet Member leagues to tackle matters of national security, clamoring to make statements about security issues in newspapers and on television, and devising ways to make them part of their election campaigns. In the ensuing years, they snatched up security questions to voice opinions on to which they had turned a blind eye for decades, such as whether Japan ought to revise the pacifist clause of its constitution, relax its ban on arms exports, authorize the mobilization of its Self Defense Forces (SDF) in the event of a national emergency, and pressure North Korea to return Japanese citizens it had abducted in the 1970s and 1980s.

The purpose of this book is to explain this turnaround. It asks why conservative Japanese politicians paid so much more attention to national security after 1997 than they did before 1997. Answering this question is important not only because their new attention is having real consequences for Japanese security policy and relations with other countries, but also because it reveals the shortcomings of existing understandings of the determinants of security policy in Japan and other democracies. Combining quantitative text analysis of a new collection of 7,497 Japanese-language candidate election manifestos with insights from more than 100 interviews with political actors at different levels of the Japanese government between 2005 and 2009, firsthand observations of the campaigns fought by conservative politicians hailing from various regions of Japan in the 2009 election, and months spent as an intern in the LDP's Tokyo headquarters, I argue that these politicians started 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. The first election under the new electoral system was held in October 1996. The finding that their new attention to national security was not made in China and had little to do with the security threat posed by North Korea or the capabilities and resolve of the United States to defend Japan is surprising, and will change the way we think about not only Japanese security policy but also the security policies of other democracies.

This chapter is organized into six sections. The first section uses primary and secondary material to describe the turnaround in attention to national security, which is the book's dependent variable. The second section explains why mainstream theories of international relations, including those crafted specifically to explain anomalies in Japanese security policy, fail to explain this turnaround. The third section points out that setting to rest speculation about its origins will substantially improve our understanding of the determinants of security policy in Japan and other democracies, which will provide information that could improve the prospects for peace and stability in East Asia. The fourth section summarizes the book's argument, research design, data, and methodology. The fifth section describes the book's contributions to the subfields of international relations, comparative politics, and Japan, respectively. The sixth section describes how the rest of the book is organized.

1.1 THE PUZZLE

For years, conservative Japanese politicians acted as if they were uninterested in national security. By "conservative Japanese politicians," I mean members of Japan's House of Representatives (HOR) who were affiliated with the LDP. This group of politicians, which ranged in size from 300 after the 1986 election to 232 after the 2000 election, governed Japan as members of the ruling party from the party's inception in 1955 until its first electoral loss in 2009, with the exception of a period of ten months between 1993 and 1994.[1] By "acted as if they were uninterested in," I mean that their activities both during and between election campaigns, in their district and in Tokyo, reflected little interest or concern with national security. By "national security," I mean any and all matters construed by conservative politicians as having consequences for the survivability of the Japanese state, including matters connected to the nature of the security threats facing Japan or the means of addressing them. A broad definition is appropriate here because politicians have leeway to define many issues as security issues and the fact that they showed little interest in doing so for many years only adds to the puzzle.

In lieu of hard data capturing how much attention they were paying to different policy areas, which is difficult to procure, we can rely on three types of evidence. First, studies of Japanese politics have routinely described conservative Japanese politicians as "reluctant" to speak out on security issues (Hellman 1977, 330), uninterested in debating national security, treating it as a "residual policy area rather than a primary one" (Bobrow 1993, 430), and not wanting "to touch security" (Cowhey 1993, 319), respectively. One study found that membership in the LDP's Defense Committee, through which any recalibration of security policy would have needed to pass, was "unpopular," meetings of the committee were "poorly attended, with only 3–5 members present," and service in security-related posts was "avoided whenever possible" (Keddell 1993, 60, 87). Another emphasized the tendency for even the politicians who were members of the Defense Committee to "defect" at budget time to secure funds for the policy areas they cared more about (Calder 1988, 423). Other authorities on Japanese politics described them as not representing military interests, being uninterested in weapons procurement (Katzenstein 1996, 108–9), exhibiting "very little interest" in foreign policy (Krauss and Pekkanen 2010, 217), ensuring security issues were off the agenda (Grimes 2003, 367), and having "little interest" in the making of security policy (Yuzawa 2007, 141), respectively. Their avoidance of international issues, another study noted, meant that the LDP was "the subject of much public and

[1] Members of the House of Councillors (HOC) who were affiliated with the LDP are not the subject of this study because they do not appear to have experienced the turnaround in attention to national security described in the following text. This is another piece of evidence that supports the theory presented in Chapter 2.

academic derision insofar as foreign policymaking is concerned" (Hook et al. 2001, 51).

Second, conservative politicians themselves have corroborated these depictions. In 1993, former conservative politician Ichiro Ozawa wrote that conservative politicians engaged in "no serious discussion or debate on Japan's future course" (Ozawa 1994, 62). In 2006, incumbent conservative politician Shigeru Ishiba wrote that for many years, Japan was a country in which the politicians entrusted with its protection, himself included, knew nothing about military affairs (Ishiba 2005, 14). Despite having a mandate to write and pass national-level legislation, they did not discuss foreign or security affairs. As an illustration, he recalls a meeting the party held after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, in which not a single one of his peers was able to say what they thought Japan ought to do in response to the crisis. "It was as if they were hearing the words 'peacekeeping operation' for the first time," he remembers. Ishiba recalls that one of his peers suggested that the government prohibit Japanese couples from honeymooning on package tours with Japan Airlines in Hawaii, his reasoning being that the bodies of American soldiers killed in the effort to free Kuwait would be sent back to Hawaii, and Japan could be criticized if it allowed its young people to continue vacationing there. Looking back, he wrote, it is obvious how tangential this politicians' "bright idea" was to the security issues at stake (Ishiba 2005, 79–84).

Third, the historical record shows that conservative politicians made few major changes to security policy in this period. One study documented only three changes to security policy in the thirty-seven years from 1955 until 1992, compared with twenty-two in the sixteen years between 1991 and 2007 (Samuels 2007, 93). In political systems in which policies are decided upon and implemented by the Prime Minister and Cabinet, the lack of changes in policy might not necessarily mean that politicians in the ruling party were not paying attention to that policy area. But for reasons that will become clearer in Chapter 2, conservative politicians had designed the policymaking process to give themselves maximum leverage over whatever their party leaders wanted to do (Estevez-Abe 2008). Given this bottom-up policymaking process, dubbed an "un-Westminster system" by one authority on Japanese politics (Mulgan 2003), the lack of changes in security policy is further evidence that these politicians were not paying these issues much attention. While there were certainly changes to security policy that should have been made, Ishiba lamented, conservative politicians simply had no interest in making them. As evidence, he points out that the governmental agency charged with formulating security policy, the Japan Defense Agency (JDA), realized that it would make politicians happier if it did not produce any legislation (Ishiba 2005, 105).

As the example of the Gulf War illustrates, this inattention persisted through the end of the Cold War and into the post Cold War period. In 1996, conservative politicians were described as not showing much interest in the situation on the Korean peninsula or in the relationship between China and Taiwan, despite the 1993–4 North Korean crisis and the 1995–6 China–Taiwan

straits crisis, not having a sound understanding of security matters, and being unwilling to help their government study those issues (e.g. *Daily Yomiuri* 1996*d*,*e*). Elsewhere, they were described as neglecting the need to consider how Japan should cooperate with its ally the United States in the event of a situation arising in an area surrounding Japan, and even how it should cooperate with its ally in the event of an attack *on Japan* (*Daily Yomiuri* 1996*a*). Whereas these politicians had agreed to legislation in 1992 allowing the participation of the SDF in international peacekeeping operations authorized by the United Nations, they had set severe restrictions on this participation, including the requirements that they not use force and be withdrawn at the first sign of hostilities. In 1996, they were described as neglecting their 1992 promise to reconsider those restrictions in three years' time (*Daily Yomiuri* 1996*b*). Elsewhere, they were described as unwilling to consider whether or not the current interpretation of the pacifist clause of Japan's constitution was appropriate and unprepared to consider Japan's future (*Daily Yomiuri* 1996*c*).

In the space of a few short months, the picture changed dramatically. By 1997, these same conservative politicians were rushing to create groups with names such as "Group to Consider Japan's Crisis and National Security" and "Diet Members' League for the Rescue of Japanese Suspected of Having Been Abducted by North Korea" to consider security-related questions such as what Japan's relationship with Taiwan should look like (*Nikkei Weekly* 1997), how the government could best "protect" Japanese people suspected to have been abducted by North Korea (*Yomiuri Shimbun* 1997*c*), and what it should do about the problems posed by U.S. bases in Okinawa (*Mainichi Shimbun* 1997). All of a sudden, they were releasing statements recommending that their government upgrade the JDA to the status of a ministry (*Daily Yomiuri* 1997*a*), for example, and establish a standing committee in the Diet dedicated to weighing up proposals for constitutional revision (*Daily Yomiuri* 1997*b*). More than 100 conservative politicians joined a group dedicated to studying issues such as worshipping at Yasukuni Shrine, where class A war criminals are enshrined, and remembering history, which they construed as having a direct bearing upon the willingness of the Japanese people to fight for their nation (*Yomiuri Shimbun* 1997*a*).

In the ensuing years, conservative politicians created a plethora of Diet Member leagues, study groups, headquarters, task forces, councils, and party subcommittees, with names such as "Diet Members League for Making a Tomorrow for the LDP," "Diet Members League for a Bright Japan," and "Diet Members League for the Creation of a Parliamentary Committee on the Constitution," in which they discussed and debated all manner of security issues and issued a variety of policy proposals. They recommended that the government adopt "preventive diplomacy" in its dealings with North Korea and Taiwan (*Yomiuri Shimbun* 1999*b*), acquire airborne-refueling technology for its F-15s (*Daily Yomiuri* 2000*a*), revise the constitution to "return U.S. bases to Japan" (*Nikkei Weekly* 1999), revise the existing interpretation of

the constitution so that Japan could exercise collective self defense, enact a fundamental law on security (*Nikkei Weekly* 2001), and exert pressure on North Korea to return any surviving Japanese abductees by, for example, prohibiting money transfers between residents of Japan and North Korea and preventing these residents from returning to Japan after visiting North Korea (Johnston 2002).

In other fora, they advocated revising the U.S. – Japan Status of Forces Agreement, which defines the legal status of U.S. troops in Japan, to alleviate the problems experienced by communities hosting U.S. bases (*Nikkei Weekly* 2003), establishing a "national security framework for the new century," revising the Fundamental Law on Education, and even learning from the Russo-Japanese War (Okubo 2004). In 2004, one newspaper put the total number of groups, including those that were presently inactive, at more than 1,000, and noted that many of them concerned matters of national security, including the need to pressure North Korea, revise Article Nine, conduct surveys of the resources under the continental shelf, maintain friendly relations with China and South Korea, and establish a "new security system for the new century," respectively (*Nikkei Weekly* 2004). In later years, their attention turned to security-related questions such as how the government should protect the islands known as Senkaku in Japan and Diaoyu in China from hypothetical Chinese encroachments (*Asahi Japan Watch* 2012*b*) and whether it should scrap the extension of a currency agreement with South Korea in protest of a visit to the islands known as Takeshima in Japan and Dokdo in South Korea by the South Korean leader (Hongo 2012). In 2008, they urged their government to make the swift dispatch of the SDF to fight pirates in the Gulf of Aden a top priority (*Yomiuri Shimbun* 2008) and invest in the acquisition of an offensive military capability capable of attacking military installations in North Korea (Liberal Democratic Party 2009), respectively.

This turnaround in attention to national security was noticed by scholars. One study found that these politicians began to "take charge" of foreign policy in the late 1990s (Grimes 2003, 367). Another observed that they had become "more assertive and vocal on security and foreign policy issues," and they were actively seeking opportunities to debate these issues in the media and draw attention to their expertise on them (Estevez-Abe and Hikotani 2008). Yuzawa noted that security issues had moved into the center of political debate in Japan as "a growing number of politicians" began aspiring to take the lead in security policymaking (Yuzawa 2007, 141), whereas Sasada noted that these politicians began making "bold statements in defense of their nation" (Sasada 2006, 106). McCormack described "a changed mood in hitherto defense-somnolent Japan" (McCormack 2002, 150). Studies of specific areas of Japanese foreign policy document debates between conservative politicians over whether the revised guidelines for U.S.–Japan security cooperation under consideration by both governments should include an explicit reference to Taiwan (Mochizuki 2007, 752), for example, and "flurries of yelling and posturing by conservative

politicians" on television over how the government ought to exert pressure on North Korea in 2005 (Lynn 2006, 492). Others noted that with their new attention came the revitalization of words not used in Japanese politics for some time, such as *kaiken* ("constitutional revision") and *kokueki* ("the national interest") (Hughes 2006*b*; Kliman 2006). If national security had "backburner status" among these politicians prior to 1997 (Bobrow 1993, 430), after 1997, it was off the backburner Why?

1.2 WHY EXISTING EXPLANATIONS ARE INADEQUATE

Such a dramatic turnaround in attention to national security among the politicians governing a county and entrusted with providing national security for that country would not be puzzling if it could be explained by variables that we already knew influenced states' security policies. We already know that when states (and by extension, the politicians representing them) make security policy, they take into account variables such as the balance of power and threat between themselves and other states (e.g. Waltz 1979; Walt 1987), the strength of their allies' commitment to their security (e.g. Snyder 1991), and collectively held ideas and norms within the state (e.g. Johnston 1996). Evidence that the Japanese government has taken these variables into account when formulating its security policy has been found in several studies (e.g. Berger 1993; Katzenstein 1996; Cha 1999; Lind 2004; Samuels 2007). While none of these variables can satisfactorily account for why the politicians governing a country would ever *not* be paying attention to national security, they might be able to account for *increases* in attention to national security. This section demonstrates that none of these variables can explain the dramatic turnaround in attention documented earlier

1.2.1 Changes in the Balance of Power

A unifying feature of the body of work that makes up the neorealist paradigm in international relations is that states formulate their security policies with an eye to preventing changes in the balance of material power that could have an adverse effect on their national security (Waltz 1979). To understand what kind of changes would fall into this category for Japan, we must recall how the government sought to secure Japan, both during the period in which conservative politicians paid little attention to national security before 1997, and the period in which they paid more attention, from 1997 until today.

In both periods, the Japanese government relied on a combination of what international relations scholars call external and internal balancing to secure Japan. In 1951, it signed the Japan–U.S. Security Treaty. In this, it gave the United States the right to maintain air, land, and sea forces in Japan for the purpose of deterring external aggression. These forces were necessary, the treaty recognized, because Japan had been disarmed and thus did not possess the

capability to defend itself. The treaty marked the end of the U.S.-led occupation of Japan (1945–51), during which time Japan was disarmed and given a constitution that contained Article Nine, a clause in which Japan renounced the threat or use of force for settling international disputes and pledged to never maintain "land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential." In 1960, the Japanese government signed a revised version of the treaty, in which Japan acquiesced to the continued presence of U.S. forces and the United States made explicit its obligation to defend Japan from external aggression. This treaty remains in place today.

Internally, in 1954, the Japanese government passed legislation establishing a SDF comprising air, naval, and sea forces, and a Japan Defense Agency to manage them. Bureaucrats in the government's Cabinet Legislative Bureau argued that these forces were purely defensive, so did not constitute the "war potential" banned in the constitution. War potential, they declared, was anything in excess of the "minimum necessary level" required for self-defense. Not only did they restrict the size and form of the capabilities the SDF could acquire, but they also restricted their use of those capabilities, declaring that the SDF could exercise self-defense only when three conditions were met: when Japan was facing an imminent and illegitimate act of aggression; when there was no other means of meeting this aggression; and when the use of force would be limited to the minimum necessary (Chai 1997; Samuels and Boyd 2005). In 1957, the government formalized the principles of its security policy, stating that Japan would rely on the U.S. security guarantee to deter external aggression and gradually buildup its own capabilities to this minimum necessary level in a series of five-year plans (Keddell 1993, 35). In 1976, it further clarified that the point of its "peacetime force of minimum size" was to meet and repel "limited, small-scale aggression" (Mochizuki 1983, 154).

Despite Japan's gradual buildup of defensive capabilities, there is a scholarly consensus that it remained heavily dependent on the combat-ready forces and nuclear deterrent supplied by the United States for security from external threats during this time (e.g. Mulgan 1988; Berger 1993; Keddell 1993; Katzenstein 1996; Heginbotham and Samuels 1998; Soeya 1998; Kawasaki 2001; Midford 2002; Grimes 2003; Hughes and Fukushima 2004; Ishiba 2005; Miyashita 2007) Relying on U.S. forces for external aggression meant that in practice the Japanese government never estimated the size of the security threat facing Japan and calibrated the size of its armed forces to meet that threat. Instead, it concentrated on developing a force posture that *complemented* U.S. forces, which meant that it was incapable of defending Japan independently (Hughes and Fukushima 2004, 67). In the words of one scholar, "Japan's position in the world is unique. No other nation in the world is so powerful and yet so dependent on another nation for defense" (Mulgan 1988, 238). Despite spending increasingly large amounts of money on its armed forces each year, the "second-most expensive military in the world" was not the second-most capable (Grimes 2003, 363). The high levels of military spending reflected the

high salaries needed to recruit and retain high-quality staff and the fact that weapons and equipment had to be purchased from Japanese contractors who were prohibited from achieving economies of scale by exporting their wares overseas. The absence of a legal framework for the mobilization of the SDF in the event of an attack on Japan and provisions for coordinated communication across the three services, respectively, suggests that the SDF may not have been entirely capable of fulfilling the mission assigned to it. In an interview, conservative politician Yasukazu Hamada told me:

> Japan's national security structure, its structure for defense, and all its military policies are completely centered around the U.S.–Japan alliance. Japan has no defense policy without America![2]

Setting aside the question of why Japan continued to rely on external balancing even after acquiring the economic and technological resources to look after itself, neorealists would contend that given that Japan had chosen this strategy, two kinds of power shifts ought to have been sufficient to elicit concern about national security from conservative politicians, which might have encouraged them to pay more attention to national security. One is if Japan's economic power was declining or had declined to the extent that these politicians had reason to doubt their continued capacity to maintain a peacetime force of minimum size. Another is if there were indications that the United States was no longer interested in or capable of holding up its end of the bargain. As Cha (1999) explains, in states that are highly dependent on the security provided by a patron, which means that they have outsourced the balancing of external security threats to that patron, perceptions of the size of external security threats are "filtered through" perceptions of the strength of the patron's commitment. It is not that perceptions of external security threats do not matter, but that they matter *less* than perceptions of the strength of the patron's commitment.

First, between 1989 and 1991, the collapse of real estate and stock markets sent the Japanese economy into a recession. However, it is difficult to make the case that zero rates of economic growth would have given conservative Japanese politicians reasons to doubt their capacity to continue building up and maintaining a peacetime force of minimum size. It is even more difficult to make the case that their turnaround in attention to national security in 1997 is explained by their concern about how a reduction in Japan's economic power could affect their ability to provide national security when it happened in 1997, six years after the recession hit. The finding that declines in Japan's economic power are uncorrelated with increases in attention to national security is unsurprising because the reverse is also true: the dramatic increase in Japan's economic power in the postwar period was uncorrelated with decreases in

[2] Interview, Tokyo, Japan, August 21, 2006.

attention to national security. The studies cited in the previous section painted a picture of constant inattention to national security.

Second, there were instances in which conservative politicians ought to have doubted either the capability or resolve of the United States to defend Japan prior to 1997, but none of these instances were sufficient to dislodge them from their inattentiveness. "From the vantage point of 1985," David Kang (2003, 176) writes, a Japanese policymaker would have to conclude that it was unlikely that the United States would still be defending Japan in 2000. Why? Because Japan had just had fifteen years of negative signals." These included U.S. President Richard Nixon's 1969 call for Asians to assume more responsibility for the defense of Asia, the scaling-back of the U.S. presence in Taiwan and South Vietnam after the Vietnam War, and the onset of economic friction in Japan's relationship with the United States in the 1980s. Other signals that the U.S. commitment to Japanese security was weakening included the U.S. government's reviewing of its posture in South Korea, the Soviet attainment of nuclear parity with the United States, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and the Soviet military build-up in East Asia, which included Backfire Bombers, SS-20s, and the stationing of troops on territory whose sovereignty was disputed with Japan (Mochizuki 1983, 157). A signal that the United States was incapable of adequately protecting Japan was the fact that North Korea was able to infiltrate Japanese territory and carry off Japanese citizens. None of these signals produced increases in attention to national security.

In 1991, the Soviet Union collapsed, removing the original rationale for the United States to offer a security guarantee to Japan. As we have seen, Japan lacked the military capabilities to defend itself and the legal framework within which the capabilities it did possess could be deployed. If there was ever a time in which conservative politicians should have doubted the resolve of the United States to defend Japan, it should have been in 1991. While the United States did not pull its troops from Japan or rescind its security guarantee, it did not publicly commit itself to continue protecting Japan until April of 1996, when the two governments signed the "Japan–U.S. Joint Declaration on Security." Recognizing that the possibility of global armed conflict had receded, the Declaration named sources of uncertainty and instability in the region such as concentrations of military force and unresolved territorial disputes, and stated that Japan's security would continue to be guaranteed by the United States, for which purpose it would "maintain its current force structure of about 100,000 forward deployed military personnel in the region, including about the current level in Japan." While it is unlikely that a simple declaration would have assuaged all of the concerns conservative politicians might have had about the strength of the U.S. commitment, it would have meant that any concerns they did have would have been *lower after 1996*, when they knew U.S. protection was intact, than between 1991 and 1996, when they had no such certainty. We are left with the puzzling observation that these politicians