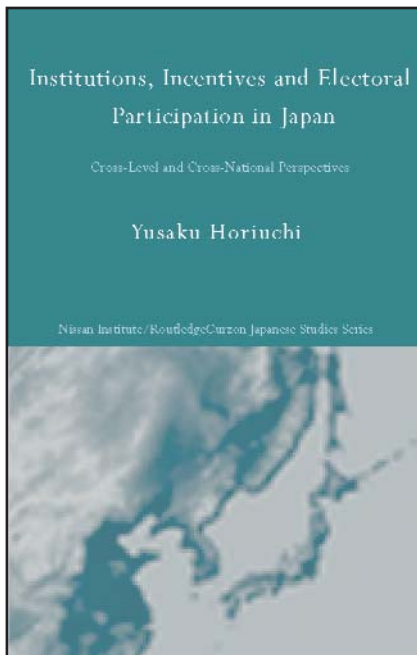


Institutions, Incentives and Electoral Participation in Japan

Cross-level and cross-national perspectives

Yusaku Horiuchi, Australian National University, Australia



American and European political scientists have claimed that subnational elections almost always record lower voter turnout than national elections. In Japan, however, municipal elections often record considerably higher turnout than national elections, particularly in small towns and villages.

Institutions, Incentives and Electoral Participation in Japan theoretically and empirically explores this puzzling 'turnout twist' phenomenon in Japan from comparative perspectives. Based on the rational choice approach, the book hypothesizes that relative voter turnout in subnational vs. national elections is determined by the relative magnitudes of how much is at stake ('election significance') and how much votes count ('vote significance') in these elections. Using a wealth of new data, the author shows the explanatory power of the hypothesis, and concludes that the counter-intuitive 'turnout twist' in Japan is a result of Japanese citizens responding to incentives produced by institutions. No matter how traditional a society is, incentives always affect behavior.

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