

ABSTRACT

AGENDA POWER IN THE JAPANESE DIET: A DURATION ANALYSIS OF LAWMAKING

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The purpose of this study is to explain how agenda power is exercised in the Japanese Diet. In the Diet, the scarcity of legislative time makes agenda power a central concern of parliamentary politics. In particular, legislative agenda prioritization determines the likelihood of a legislative proposal becoming law, and structures the relationship between politicians and bureaucrats.

I depart from existing studies in portraying the Diet as a political institution in which the ruling majority exercises influence. First, I revisit the institutional design of the Diet drawing on aggregate performance measures. Second, I examine the effect of agenda prioritization at the individual legislation level. By applying the statistical technique of duration modeling on a data set of individual legislation from postwar Diet sessions, I show that a government proposal given agenda priority is estimated to take less time to pass the Diet and have a higher chance of legislative success. The estimates also imply that the extent to which agenda prioritization affects the likelihood of successful legislation is a function of the ruling majority's ability to take control of the legislative agenda.

To test the majority structure of the Diet, I also examine a selection of parliamentary institutions and the relationship between the legislative and the administrative branches. In my examination of legislative institutional selection, I find that the rules of the Diet, under which the majority exercises agenda power, have been institutionalized to influence legislative behavior in the manner intended by the majority. With respect to the legislative-administrative relationship, I show that the administrative agencies producing legislative proposals that the majority prioritizes are systematically rewarded in terms of their administrative discretion and organizational independence.