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of energy politics in Japan that complements the earlier work of Richard Samuels.¹

Readers may find that Lesbirel speaks more to utilities interested in siting plants than to communities interested in opposing them. Lesbirel suggests that utilities in other countries could learn from the Japanese example of using compensation in bargaining to make power-plant siting more attractive to local communities. He uses the quantitative data and the case studies to draw conclusions about the conditions under which successful siting is most likely to occur.

In the conclusion, Lesbirel notes that the siting of new nuclear facilities has become much more difficult since the mid-1980s. Utilities now face 20- to 30-year lead times to win public acceptance for nuclear power plants in communities that do not already have them. He also mentions the case of Maki where local residents used a referendum to oppose a planned nuclear facility and suggests that new nuclear development in Japan will be difficult outside of areas that already have nuclear power.

The future may be even dimmer for the nuclear industry in Japan than Lesbirel suggests. The sources of opposition to nuclear power plant development are changing. In the past, as Lesbirel notes, energy-facility siting was blocked primarily by fishing cooperatives that feared the effects nuclear power plants would have on their industry. Compensation could be used to win these groups over. The structure of environmental protest in Japan, however, is changing. New nationally and internationally focused environmental groups are emerging. Future nuclear power plant development is likely to engender not only local protest from fishing cooperatives but broader local, national, and conceivably even international protest that is concerned with the safety of nuclear energy and problems related to the disposal of nuclear waste. Several small-scale accidents at nuclear power plants and the major accident at the Tokaimura uranium-processing plant have heightened public concern about this energy source.

The government's plans to build as many as 20 new nuclear power plants to meet future energy needs is not likely to succeed in the face of this growing network of opposition. Protest against new plant siting is likely to be broader in scale than was true in the 1970s and 1980s—the period covered by Lesbirel's work. This suggests that the bargaining process itself will also have to change and that compensation mechanisms employed in the past may no longer be as effective in the future. It also means there is lots of room for further study of nuclear energy politics in Japan.

A question that could conceivably also emerge in Japan in the coming years is whether or not nuclear energy can be replaced by other energy

1. Richard J. Samuels, *The Business of the Japanese State: Energy Markets in Comparative and Historical Perspective* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987).

sources. If this debate emerges in Japan (as has happened in Germany), then the question will be not how utilities compensate local communities, but how the government compensates the utilities.

Advice and Consent: The Politics of Consultation in Japan. By Frank J. Schwartz. Cambridge University Press, 1998. xiv, 237 pages. \$54.95.

Reviewed by
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With all of the attention given to politicians and bureaucrats in recent writing on Japanese politics, interest groups have been relatively neglected. Frank Schwartz's study is therefore a welcome addition to the field, for he shines the spotlight directly on interest groups as he explores the role they play across a range of issue areas in the Japanese policymaking process. Japan's proliferation of advisory councils (*shingikai*), he argues, offers an excellent venue for observing how interest groups interact with other players in the policy process. Through richly detailed accounts of how policy was made on issues of labor standards, financial market reforms, and rice prices during the 1980s, focusing in particular on how conflicting views of interest groups were mediated through the use of advisory councils in these cases, Schwartz argues that a *neopluralist* model best fits the pattern he observed.

In making this claim, Schwartz is taking on political scientists who have advocated competing models of the Japanese policymaking system. Rarely, he argues, did *state bureaucrats* with a firm agenda of their own dominate and manipulate interest groups as has often been claimed. Neither did they delegate power to peak interest group organizations along the lines of the *corporatist* model. They didn't favor business over labor to a degree that would justify characterizing the Japanese system in *power elite* terms. And the process wasn't fluid and open enough to be called *pluralist*. No, he concludes, it was "neopluralist."

As the foregoing paragraph suggests, the neopluralist view is easiest to characterize in terms of what it isn't. Schwartz's own definition doesn't clarify things much:

What exists in Japan is not a single policymaking process pitting bureaucrats, politicians, private interests, and other concerned parties against one another, but an assortment of distinct, fairly self-contained policymaking processes that bring predictable sets of these actors together. (p. 41)

What Schwartz actually describes is much more interesting than this definition implies. He tells a series of stories about how advisory councils served as the locus where groups with conflicting interests were forced to sit down with each other and figure out a policy that would be minimally acceptable to most of them. Bureaucrats intervened by deciding who would sit on the councils (hence the “predictable set of actors”) and sometimes pushed the groups toward compromise when a deal was not forthcoming, but they were mostly content to approve whatever deal was reached so that they could be relieved of the stress of having to deal with conflict.

I had an epiphany of sorts about what Schwartz was describing as I was forced a few weeks ago to deal with a conflict of my own in my administrative role as director of the East Asia Center here at the University of Virginia. Two senior faculty (one on the Japan side, one on the China side) were hosting visiting scholars, but I had only one desk to offer. To whom should I offer the desk? If I administered as a “strong state” bureaucrat with an agenda of my own (say, to build up Japanese Studies at the expense of the China side), I would have simply offered the desk to my Japan-side colleague with minimal consultation. If I was operating in a “power elite” environment, where one side was clearly dominant and I was merely its puppet, I would have offered the desk to the dominant faction. Instead, I did what Schwartz says Japanese bureaucrats usually do. I asked my colleagues to consult among themselves and figure out who should get the desk. It turned out the Chinese guest was more in need of a desk than the other visitor and that it was mutually acceptable to offer him the desk, so I rubber-stamped my colleagues’ decision. This way of deciding things, I realized, relieves me of a lot of potential stress. No wonder Japanese officials like to refer disputes to advisory councils and force them to come up with the policy rather than making tough choices themselves.

That the Japanese policymaking process routinely works this way contradicts much of the received wisdom about the way things work. Japanese officials are supposed to have goals of their own that they push through the policy process, to create a more efficient economy or to protect Japanese industry. Instead, what they do in each of Schwartz’s cases is approve whatever deal all sides in the debate were finally able to accept. In the labor standards case, for example, Ministry of Labor (MOL) officials endorsed a deal that reduced the length of the work week less than labor unions and international critics were demanding but more than small business groups had hoped—using the “expert” chair of the advisory council to convince representatives of each faction that the final deal was fair and appropriate. Similarly, in the financial markets case, Ministry of Finance officials opted for a compromise that created new derivatives markets in Tokyo but kept key markets closed to banks in one case and securities firms in the other in order to respect the vehement wishes of each side.

While these accounts clearly contradict the strong-state view of the Japanese policy process, neither do they offer clear support to the most prominent rival account: the principal-agent model of Mark Ramseyer and Frances Rosenbluth which asserts that bureaucrats carry out policy with an eye to what their political masters will approve.¹ In two out of the three cases Schwartz covers in detail, politicians play virtually no role. In the labor standards case, for example, politicians are not even mentioned in the first 30 pages of the chronology. Schwartz notes that MOL officials kept politicians apprised of the progress they were making prior to the submission of their legislative proposal to the cabinet, but he emphasizes that this was a one-way transmission of information. Though the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) set up a study group on the issue (a reduction of labor hours, after all, is the kind of policy politicians in countries such as France have placed at the top of their campaign platforms!), the politicians deliberately avoided taking a side on the question of how deeply labor hours should be cut. They perceived, Schwartz argues, that “any expression of party views prior to the emergence of a detailed plan would have opened the LDP to charges of meddling” (p. 149). MOL officials therefore seem to have operated under very loose political constraints as they went about using their advisory council to hammer out a deal that would be minimally acceptable to all relevant interest groups.

In Schwartz’s third case, involving rice prices, politicians not surprisingly were much more involved. In fact, Schwartz describes how the Rice Price Council in 1987 ended up having to approve *ex post* a price deal politicians had already brokered. What he emphasizes, however, is that the politicians in this case exhibited the same tendencies he saw among bureaucrats in the labor standards and financial market cases: they spent most of their time searching for the policy that would be minimally acceptable to all relevant interest groups. As a result, Nakasone was forced to compromise on his hopes of cutting rice prices enough to appeal to urban salaried workers and reduce the LDP’s dependence on the farm vote. Producer rice prices were merely frozen in 1986 and the cut in 1987 was trimmed to just 5.95 per cent, despite the fact that farm expenses had fallen more sharply as a result of the strengthening of the yen. Consumers saw a savings of just ¥152 a month in their rice bill (p. 258).

For Schwartz, therefore, the pattern that stands out across his three cases is not the contrasting roles of bureaucrats or politicians but the consistent influence of organized interest groups who were able in all of these cases to water down proposals for more far-reaching policy change. Small business was able to ensure that it could continue to force workers to work hours

1. J. Mark Ramseyer and Frances Rosenbluth, *Japan's Political Marketplace* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993).

much longer than international norms, financial interests were able to delay and water down proposals to create new derivatives markets, and farmers were able to scale back plans to cut rice prices.

This book's greatest strength, in addition to its fresh focus on interest groups, is the richness of detail he provides about the policymaking process in his case study chapters. Each long chapter chronicles a policy debate from the germ of an idea through the legislative process, in "how a bill becomes a law" fashion. These chapters themselves contain almost no references to theory or models, leaving the reader with the task of figuring out how specific details fit with the general argument summarized above. This approach might turn off readers who want more of a guided tour through the cases, but it should make the chapters useful supplemental reading material for students in courses on Japanese politics. After students have read the strong arguments of Chalmers Johnson on the one hand and Ramseyer and Rosenbluth on the other, they could be given one or more of these chapters and asked to figure out for themselves which side—if any—the cases support.

Schwartz's passion is clearly with the details of his cases. Thus at the end of his theory chapters and before turning to his three cases studies, he writes: "from the gray of theory, then, to the green of life's growing tree" (p. 115). Not surprisingly, with this attitude toward theory, Schwartz's literature review and theory chapters (which cover 115 pages!) are much drier. They offer a nice summary of the literature for graduate students new to Japanese politics, but readers familiar with the field can afford to skim through these sections.

The other weakness of the book is its refusal to conform to the emerging political science consensus that holds that studies of this kind should focus on *variation* in outcomes. As noted above, Schwartz's emphasis is on how a single form of interest group mediation characterized all three of his cases. His qualitative research design is thus based on the "most different" formula, where a common outcome across cases that vary in many ways suggests that the author has identified an important causal variable. Schwartz argues that these three cases were quite different, especially in the degree to which the policy issues were politicized. The finding that all were characterized by neopluralist interest group intermediation despite this variation suggests that Japanese policymaking inherently takes this form. Many readers will have no problem with this approach, but qualitative method hawks (I guess I'm becoming one) will raise a number of questions.

First, how can Schwartz know that he sampled cases that were varied enough in all potentially relevant areas to prove that all Japanese interest group intermediation takes this form? All of the cases were from around 1987, under the administration of Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro. How do we know that this pattern was not something unique to that time period? Even during this period, I can think of some cases (such as the privatization of the national railroads) where relevant groups such as hard-line labor

groups were not consulted in neopluralist fashion. More recently, we have the example of the financial Big Bang (in one of the same issue areas that Schwartz covered) where far-reaching reforms were adopted without waiting for all relevant groups to consent. Is it possible that neopluralism was the privilege of a subset of interest groups operating under an old electoral system and not a more general pattern?

This line of questioning leads to the next criticism: how does Schwartz know that the consistent outcomes across his cases were not subject to "multiple causality"? While the three cases differed in the degree to which they were politicized, maybe all were characterized by neopluralist interest intermediation for different reasons, in the labor case because the LDP was torn between small business seeking longer hours and big business worried about international criticism, for example, while in the rice case because the LDP was torn between farmers and urban voters. Is the pattern still neopluralist when an issue can be resolved in such a way that an outcome allows all LDP supporters to win at the expense of interest groups that back other parties?

The final difficulty with Schwartz's approach is that it does not allow him to identify what it is about the Japanese policymaking process that makes interest group intermediation take a neopluralist form. Without looking at variation across cases, time, or countries, there is no way to tease out what it is that brings about this outcome. Is it Japanese culture, the old Lower House electoral system, the stable pattern of LDP rule, or is neopluralism something that characterizes all democratic political systems and not just Japan?

Schwartz clearly makes a conscious decision to reject the conventions of political science that generated all of the above questions, and as noted I expect many readers will not be bothered in the least by this choice. Readers interested not just in a description of *how* interest groups shape policy in Japan but also in *why*, however, may come away from the book wishing Schwartz had designed his study in order to shed more light on this question.

Regime Shift: Comparative Dynamics of the Japanese Political Economy.

By T. J. Pempel. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1998. xi, 263 pages.
\$49.95, cloth; \$17.95, paper.

Reviewed by
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University of Tokyo

Until the early 1990s, Japan was an unblemished example of a successful capitalist economy. It achieved outstanding economic growth in the 1950s