

JAPANESE DIPLOMACY: The Role of Leadership. *SUNY Series, James N. Rosenau Series in Global Politics.* By *H.D.P. Envall.* Albany: SUNY Press, 2015. xiv, 251 pp. (Tables.) US\$85.00, cloth. ISBN 978-1-4384-5497-9.

How have Japanese prime ministers' leadership styles, personalities, perceptions, and beliefs shaped Japan's foreign relations? To what extent have Japanese prime ministers, especially those before the arrival of Koizumi Junichiro in the 2000s, been able to pursue idiosyncratic leadership styles not necessarily in step with their political environment? In the existing literature related to Japanese foreign policy, most studies have focused on the role of Japanese national identity and the change of material structure in the context of the power rivalry between China and the United States in East Asia. By contrast, this book successfully demonstrates the significant impact of the prime minister in shaping Japanese foreign policy. It offers an alternative theoretical perspective on understanding Japanese foreign relations via the lens of political leadership.

The main body of the book consists of two parts. In the first part, three aspects focused on the theoretical, environmental, and historical context of Japanese leadership at the macro level are discussed. Chapter 1 introduces the general literature of leadership studies, and the foreign and domestic constraints towards political leadership. Chapter 2 offers a general analysis of Japanese political leaders and their diplomatic leadership, and chapter 3 reviews the role of Japanese prime ministers since the Second World War. In the second part, three case studies of Japanese prime ministers before the 2000s are presented in a stimulating and thoughtful way. The three cases all focus on Japanese prime ministers' performances during international summits. Chapter 4 evaluates Ohira's leadership at the Tokyo summit in 1979. Chapter 5 examines Prime Minister Suzuki's leadership in Ottawa in 1981, and Nakasone's leadership at the Williamburg summit in 1983.

Two major arguments are offered in the book. First, the author rightly points out that Japanese political leadership in foreign affairs cannot be easily typecast and viewed as simply a representation of domestic preferences. Through the three case studies, all three prime ministers demonstrated a distinct leadership vision and style that reflected their personal beliefs, proving that preferences do matter in the process of Japanese foreign policy making. Second, by developing two concepts, action and actor dispensability, the author finds that Japanese prime ministers had a significant influence on the country's diplomacy. The author points out that this is particularly true in Japan's summit diplomacy, with the effective employment of leadership strategy.

The book makes a significant contribution to understanding the role of prime ministers in Japan's foreign policy making through the theoretical lens of political leadership. It would be more interesting if the author could offer further discussion on how the change of electoral systems influences the

degree of Japanese prime ministers' autonomy on making their foreign policy decisions based on their own personal beliefs and preferences. As the author rightly points out, leadership environments matter in the decision-making process. Since 1994, the role of the Japanese prime minister in the ruling party has been significantly empowered due to electoral system reform, with a combined electoral system initiated in the House of Representatives (Lower House) with single-member districts and proportional representation in regional constituencies. Under the new electoral system, with the introduction of 300 single-member districts, the prime minister has the authority to endorse party members as official candidates and to allocate the political funding of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). Unlike in the previous medium-sized election district system, only a single LDP candidate runs in each lower-house election district, which means that a Japanese prime minister (as party leader) would be able to discourage party members who do not follow his or her policy preferences by not nominating him/her or allocating political funding for a national election campaign (for example, Koizumi's election on postal service privatization in 2005). On the other hand, Japanese prime ministers are also being constrained due to the linkage of their approval rating (*naikaku shijilitsu*) and their domestic political survival. If the prime minister's approval rating declines significantly, he or she will be perceived by party members as not being able to lead the party to win the next national election, undermining his or her domestic legitimacy within the ruling party. In many cases, seeking political survival has been the precondition for Japanese prime ministers when they decide whether to pursue a policy based on their personal preferences and political beliefs. The policy variation revealed in the recent two Abe administrations over the Yasukuni problem (Abe visited the Yasukuni Shrine in 2013 but not in 2006, 2014, or 2015) indeed offers an interesting insight to understanding the power and limitations of Japanese prime ministers, which should be the subject of future research.

In sum, this book is highly recommended for anyone interested in Japanese foreign policy, domestic politics, and leadership studies, as it offers a unique perspective on our understanding of Japanese foreign policy making that has been typically ignored in the current IR literature in general and Japanese foreign relations in particular. A leadership study of Japanese prime ministers will be able to provide an effective road map for readers to understand the future development of Japanese diplomacy.

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