

## Do Japanese Youth Want Japan to be a “Normal Nation”?

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### Abstract

This study aims to identify what was common to electoral districts where hawkish candidates won seats in recent Japanese general elections. I hypothesize that a higher proportion of young voters in an electoral district led to the election of more hawkish candidates, as Japanese youth were said to be increasingly conservative and “nationalistic,” which means supportive of stronger defense policies. By using R, regression models are run to test whether candidates elected in districts with a higher proportion of young voters were more hawkish in 2013, 2016, and 2017 general elections. The models show, in contrary to expectations, that politicians elected in districts with a higher proportion of young voters were less hawkish. The results indicate that Japanese youth are not as nationalistic as previous studies argued and are still supportive of pacifist policies. Based on this finding, this article predicts that the rapid decline of pacifism in Japan is unlikely to happen in the future.

**Keywords:** normal nation, LDP, Japanese youth, Article 9, hawkish politicians

## **Introduction**

Conventional wisdom indicates that younger people are less conservative than older people. Therefore, the popularity of Japan's current ruling party, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), and its leader and the Prime Minister Shinzo Abe among the young Japanese has become an important focus of public and media attention. Both the LDP and Abe are considered to be conservative and even regarded as nationalistic, as some people view Abe and his fellow LDP members as unapologetic regarding the colonial past of Japan. Also, the Abe cabinet and the LDP are willing to revise the "pacifist" constitution of Japan, which restricts Japan's remilitarization and call for a militarily stronger Japan regardless of the vehement opposition of left-wing pacifist camps in Japan.

Pacifist parties that opposed the revision of the postwar constitution and Japan's remilitarization used to be popular among the young Japanese in the past. From 1955 to 1959, the rate of support of people from 20 to 39 years old for the Japan Socialist Party (JSP), which was one of the most prominent pacifist parties of Japan until 1996, was higher than the rate for the LDP. From the late 1960s, however, the rate of support of people from 20 to 39 years old for the LDP became higher than the rate for the JSP (Ida 2009, 94). Today, young people seem to prefer conservative parties that advocate stronger national defense policies to antimilitary leftist parties.

It is also argued that Japanese youth are not only conservative but also more "nationalistic," which means supportive of stronger defense policies and antagonistic to Japan's neighboring countries, such as China and Korea (Sasada 112). If this argument is valid, the implications for the future of the East Asian security environment will be significant. As more and more Japanese people who experienced the devastating war and resisted the remilitarization in postwar Japan will pass away, the relative electoral influence of the younger people who are more supportive of remilitarizing Japan and hostile to their neighboring countries will grow. The generational change would, in theory, accelerate the process of making a militarily active, stronger Japan. Hence, it is essential to know more about the preferences of Japanese youth regarding the defense policies of Japan to predict how Japan's defense policy will evolve in the future.

Despite the significant implications for the future of Japan and East Asia, however, other than Sasada, scholars pay insufficient attention to whether or not young Japanese people prefer hawkish politicians today, as youth attitudes toward defense policies may be seen as minor aspects of the alleged young conservative/nationalistic trend. Hence, this article aims to examine this question through the quantitative analysis of 2013, 2016, and 2017 election results. The crucial part of this study is to identify factors that determine the voting behavior in electoral districts where hawkish candidates were elected. If young people were truly sympathetic to the hawkish politicians who advocated stronger national defense policies, the districts with a larger presence of young voters should have more hawkish politicians elected. If this study could observe such a tendency, it will support the claim that Japanese youth as a whole are more supportive of hawkish politicians. It also implies that generational change in Japan is likely to cause the rapid decline of anti-militarism in Japan. Consequently, the transformation of Japan from a pacifist country to a more militarily stronger country in the future is possible. Should the opposite be the case, however, the assertion that Japanese youth are nationalistic will be questionable, as it indicates that a larger presence of Japanese youth inhibited the election of hawkish candidates.

The first part of this article provides information about the history of postwar Japan, changes in the East Asian security environment, and the alleged political trend of Japanese youth. The second part will discuss the hypothesis and the methods used for this study. The main hypothesis to test in this study is that politicians elected in districts with a higher proportion of young voters were more hawkish because constituencies with a large cohort of young voters should reward hawkish candidates, provided that Japanese youth were truly supportive of stronger defense policies. Afterward, this article presents the results of statistical analysis and discusses the implications for Japanese youth today.

### **History of Anti-Militarism in Postwar Japan**

After losing WWII, Japan implemented domestic structural reforms under the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers

(SCAP). The structural reform aimed at restricting postwar Japan's rearmament, lest Japan should become a dangerous expansionist nation once again. The well-known clause, Article 9, which prohibits Japan from maintaining "land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential" (Constitution of Japan), was a remnant of SCAP's early attempt to pacify Japan thoroughly. After Japan adopted the postwar constitution, however, the United States recognized the need to rearm Japan to counter the rising communist influence in East Asia. The defeat of the pro-US Chinese Nationalist Party and Japan's regional proximity to the Korean War inevitably led the United States to choose Japan as a strategic partner in defending the free world from the Communist threat (Averil 2013, 158-163). This partnership created a paradoxical situation in which a country whose constitution prohibits the possession of any "war potential" now maintained highly modernized professional armed forces. It is considered constitutional, according to the 1958 ruling of the Japanese Supreme Court that Article 9 was not to deny Japan's right of self-defense (Supreme Court of Japan).

Nevertheless, the constitution strictly restrains Japan's use of force other than in self-defense. Overseas deployment of forces never took place until 1993's UN peacekeeping operation in Cambodia, into which Japanese personnel were sent unarmed (Shenon 1993). The Self Defense Force (SDF), the de facto Japanese military institution, operates under strict rules to stay faithful to Article 9. Even though the foreign-imposed constitution diminished Japan's sovereign right to decide when and how to use its armed forces, the public demand for the revision of the constitutional clause was weak because Japanese citizens embraced Article 9. Furthermore, losing a war made Japanese people hostile to the military institution itself, which they thought was responsible for dragging their country into a hopeless war (Berger 1993, 131137).

Although Article 9 did not wholly disarm Japan, it became the normative basis of Japan's postwar national identity as a "peace state," which made Japan an "abnormal" pacifist country. The public support for the "peace constitution" was so strong that few politicians dared to advocate an expanded role for the SDF. Advocating policies that appeared to be a deviation from the defense-only rule was too risky politically. For instance, the renewal

of the US-Japan alliance treaty in 1960 incited the largest public protest in modern Japanese history, known as the “Ampo Crisis.” The then-Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi, the grandfather of current Prime Minister Abe, resigned due to his role in causing the political crisis (Scalapino and Masumi 1962).

The public disapproval of Kishi illustrated that the Japanese public had become extremely sensitive to any military policy reforms. Revising Article 9, the foundation of the defense-only policy, was unthinkable. Consequently, the LDP, the primary ruling party of Japan since 1955, has not attempted any major changes to the language despite advocating the revision of the constitution since it first came to power in 1955.<sup>1</sup> Politicians, even the conservative ones, knew the constitutional revision would not win popular support.

### Changes in the International Environment

Once the Cold War ended, however, the changing international environment forced the pro-peace Japanese citizens and politicians to reconsider whether they should continue to cling to the country’s defense-only policy. China’s growing military might has become the primary concern of Japanese policymakers. As shown in **Figure 1**, China’s military expenditure is steadily increasing while Japan’s is static. The GDP share of China’s military expenditure itself has not changed dramatically, but the amount of money spent on the Chinese military is growing. On the other hand, the share of Japan’s GDP spent on the military has been around one percent over time, and the amount of money spent on Japan’s armed forces is almost unchanged. The Japanese government created an informal limit on Japan’s military expenditure in 1976 as a way to ward off criticism on its increased military spending in the early 1970s (Sanada 2010). As long as the US maintains its military superiority to China, Japan may feel comfortable staying at one percent. However, in the future, further growth of China’s military

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<sup>1</sup> The sixth plank of the first party platform of the LDP made in 1955 refers to the revision of the constitution. The new party platform made in 2005 also lists the revision of the constitution as one of the policy objectives. In both cases, however, the LDP does not single out Article 9 for revision. See Liberal Democratic Party of Japan (1955).

power, or a potential decline in US power, may compel Japanese policymakers to abandon the informal rule created by the defense-only policy.

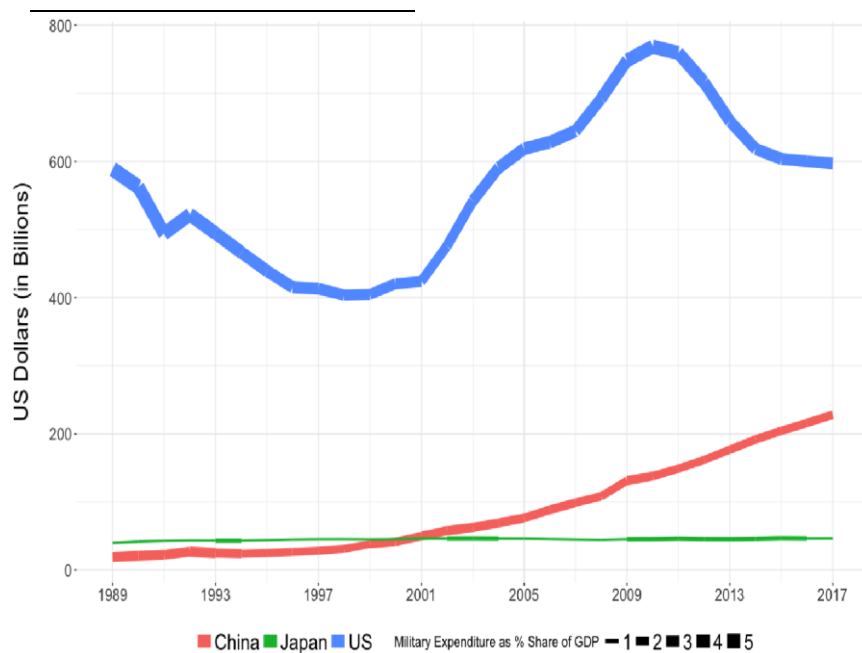


Figure 1: Military Expenditures of Japan, China, and the US. The line weight shows the GDP share of military expenditure. Data obtained from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (2018)

The rapid development of North Korean nuclear missile capabilities also challenges Japan's adherence to the defense-only policy. This threat from North Korea has already caused a reinterpretation of Article 9 in 2014, providing the legal basis for Japan to exercise the right of collective self-defense, or the right to

defend allies. In this instance, there was pressure from the US on Japan to contribute to the alliance. Before the reinterpretation, Japan could not defend the US since protecting other countries was considered unconstitutional. Regardless, Japan had to accommodate the implicit US demand to legalize Japan's use of a ballistic missile defense system to intercept North Korean missiles aimed at the US (Pekkanen 2015). Donald Trump's presidency further accelerated Japan's departure from the defense-only policy, as Trump is highly critical of the "free riders" of the alliance, making the Japanese fearful of potential abandonment (Oros 2017, 160-162). If threats from China and North Korea continue to grow, the US demand for Japan to share the burden of defense will be much stronger.

### **Anti-Militarism and Japanese Youth**

Anti-militarism persists in Japan and inhibits the rapid development of the Japanese defense system. However, increased external pressures have driven Japanese politicians to loosen limitations to Japan's use of force. The policy changes under the LDP and Prime Minister Abe since 2012 reflects this trend. Abe was bolder than older LDP politicians in expanding the role of the SDF, as he established the Japanese National Security Council in 2014, the first military-related advisory body to the postwar Japanese government (Ibid, 134). Abe also carried out the 2014 reinterpretation of Article 9 and the 2016 passage of a series of related security bills. These changes are the moves pushed for by conservative politicians that will transform Japan from an abnormal pacifist nation to a "normal nation."<sup>2</sup>

Besides, Japanese pacifists see these moves as a possible resurgence of wartime militarism. An editorial writer at the newspaper Asahi Shimbun, critical of the Abe cabinet and the LDP,

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<sup>2</sup> I use Andrew Oros's definition of the word "normal." To Oros, normalization means Japan's gradual departure from the three tenets of "no traditional armed forces, no use of force by Japan except in selfdefense, [and] no Japanese participation in foreign wars" (2008, 10). "Pacifists" oppose the normalization of Japan and insist that SDF's capabilities be kept to a minimum. Some pacifists even call for the complete elimination of the SDF. For details of the definition "normal," see Oros (2008, 1-2, 10-12).

denounced the reinterpretation of Article 9, claiming that Abe attempted to reinstate the militarist slogan “rich country, strong army (Miura 2014).” Media reported on the alleged 100,000 protesters in front of the Diet (Japanese Parliament) and the formation of the Student Emergency Action for Liberal Democracy (SEALDs), a student organization mobilized to demand the resignation of the Prime Minister. Abe’s cabinet approval rate also dropped below 50 percent right after the reinterpretation of Article 9 (Pekkanen and Pekkanen 2016, 44). The unpopularity of this security-related legislation suggests that anti-militarism remains strong in Japan.

Nevertheless, Abe’s LDP continued to secure a supermajority of seats in the general elections. Furthermore, through the victory of the LDP in the 2016 House of Councillors’ election, for the first time, the number of politicians who were supportive of the constitutional revision exceeded two-thirds of the seats in both \_\_\_\_\_ houses. This approval enabled the initiation of a national referendum to revise the constitution, as stated in Article 96 of the Constitution. Anti-militarism in Japanese society and the public attachment to the defense-only rule continues to weaken, as the changing international order alters the public perception of threats to Japan.

Moreover, possibly because of the conventional view that young people were less conservative and more liberal, the recent reports that the young Japanese are supportive of the conservative Abe cabinet and LDP came as a surprise to some journalists. In October 2017, Mainichi Shimbun, critical of the conservative Abe cabinet, published an article whose title reads “The mind of the youth who let the LDP win: “Youth = Anti-Authority” has become a fantasy.” Mainichi Shimbun reported that Abe’s approval rate in voters in the twenties ranged from 50 to 40 percent, while other demographics had rates that range from 30 to 40 percent. The LDP support rate from the twenties age group amounted to nearly 40 percent; the older generations’ approval rates were around 20 percent (Shoji 2017). Mainichi’s other article also shows that in the 2016 election, 47.2 percent of teenage voters (aged 18-19) and 42.1 percent of the twenties age group voted for the LDP in the proportional representation, underscoring how popular the LDP was among young voters in the election (Okuma, Mito, and Nohara 2017).



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Sankei News, a right-leaning news media outlet, reported the same trend in February 2017. According to Sankei, it was unprecedented that the twenties and thirties age groups' support for the LDP was higher than the sixties and older demographics' support rates in three consecutive surveys conducted in October, November, and December 2017 (Sankei 2017). Although the support rates of the younger age groups have not differed dramatically from that of the older groups, it is a surprising phenomenon that younger people support the conservative LDP as much as their older counterparts, given that in the past, youth were the major actors in the anti-war and anti-government movements.<sup>3</sup>

Sasada (2006) further elaborates upon this trend, going so far as to say that Japanese youth are not only conservative but also more nationalistic, which means supportive of stronger defense policies of Japan. Sasada points out that new media, such as manga and the Internet, contributed to this new trend. For example, manga, or Japanese comic books, provide a platform for rightwingers to promote xenophobic views toward China and Korea because of historical tensions related to past Japanese colonialism. The Internet can also make young people more nationalistic and hawkish, as it exposes them to controversial racial and ethnic issues (118-1v b20).

This study pays special attention to Sasada's argument that Japanese youth are supportive of stronger defense policies that challenge the "traditional postwar pacifism." If this is the case, it is possible that the East Asian security landscape evolves drastically in the future. As discussed, pacifism rooted in postwar Japanese society has confined the development of postwar Japan's defense policies. However, once the older Japanese generations that stubbornly resist Japan's remilitarization throughout history are replaced with the younger generation that is said to be more nationalistic and hawkish, it would result in the decline of pacifism in Japan. In such a situation, it would be much easier for hawkish policymakers to change the pacifist policies of Japan. As a result,

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<sup>3</sup> The radical student organization *Zengakuren* played a key role in the aforementioned Ampo Crisis and other revolutionary activities. For details, see Scalapino and Masumi (1962, 136-141).

Japan will become a country that is more willing to use its armed forces to settle international disputes, which will increase the likelihood of Japan's armed conflict with other countries.

Thus, knowing to what extent Japanese youth are supportive of stronger defense policies is crucial. However, it is difficult because it would require a comprehensive survey of young Japanese populations, which is often costly and technically difficult. Perhaps, that is why few academics attempted to test it. One of the few works that may be useful is the study conducted by Inamasu and Miura (2015), which used online surveys of college students in comparison to working adults. Their study found that 36.6 percent of college students had a positive attitude toward the constitutional revision, while 40.3 percent of college students had a negative attitude toward it. Additionally, 37.7 percent of college students had a positive attitude toward Japan's exercising the right of collective self-defense, while 39.6 percent of college students had a negative attitude toward it because of their concern that Japan may be entrapped in international conflicts.<sup>4</sup> Both findings show that

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Japanese college students were actually divided regarding the defense policies of Japan. Should the tendency be also applicable to all the young Japanese generations, it is problematic to posit that Japanese youth are "nationalistic."

Another useful information source is the public opinion polls conducted every three years by Japan's Cabinet Office regarding Japan's defense policies. Two recent polls conducted in 2014 and 2017 show that just around 30 percent of those who were 18 to 29 years old and 30 to 39 years old supported the strengthening of the SDF, while more than 60 percent of these respondents supported the status quo.<sup>5</sup> Given that the overwhelming majority of Japanese youth were found to be unsupportive of strengthening the SDF, it is clear that the claim that the Japanese youth are supportive of stronger defense policies needs to be carefully examined.

As mentioned, conducting a comprehensive survey of Japanese youth was difficult, so this study used a new approach that

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<sup>4</sup> Inamasu and Miura's survey shows that 12.2 percent of college students were supportive of the constitutional revision and 24.4 percent of college students were somewhat supportive; 24.4 percent of college students were somewhat unsupportive and 16.1 percent of college

<sup>5</sup> See the Cabinet Office (2014; 2017).

used the publicly available data to examine the research question. Specifically, this study combines the survey data of politicians elected in recent general elections with the demographic data of their constituencies to analyze the relationship between the two variables: the attitudes of politicians and the presence of younger voters in electoral districts.

### Hypotheses

I predict that if Japanese youth were indeed nationalistic and hawkish, politicians elected in districts with a higher proportion of young voters should also be nationalistic and hawkish. The reason is that if a politician is elected in an electoral district, he or she becomes the representative of his or her constituency; hence, we can assume that the policy attitudes of the politician reflects the policy attitudes of their constituents as a whole. Based on this assumption, we can also presume that politicians would advocate hawkish policies preferred by Japanese youth when their districts have a higher proportion of young voters. Therefore, districts with

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students were unsupportive. In addition, 14.2 percent of college students were supportive of Japan's exercising its right of collective self-defense and 23.5 percent of college students were somewhat supportive; 15.2 percent of college students were somewhat unsupportive and 15.2 percent of college students were unsupportive. For details, see Inamasu and Miura (2015, 59).

a higher proportion of young voters are expected to have more hawkish candidates elected. This is the first hypothesis of this study (denoted by *H1*) that expects a positive correlation between the hawkish attitudes of elected representatives and a higher proportion of young voters in their electoral districts. If this hypothesis is supported, the claim that Japanese youth were indeed supportive of stronger defense policies will be substantiated.

*H1: Politicians elected in districts with a higher proportion of young voters are more hawkish*

There are two possible alternative outcomes to this expected result. It is possible that there is actually a negative relationship between the hawkish attitudes of elected politicians and the size of their

young constituencies. In other words, a higher proportion of young voters in an electoral district can lead to the election of less hawkish candidates. This occurs if young voters, not the old ones, prefer pacifist candidates to hawkish candidates. Should it be the case, it will challenge the claim that nationalistic Japanese youth prefer stronger defense policies. Rather, it will support the conventional wisdom that the youth are more liberal, which means more pacifistic in this article.

*H2: Politicians elected in districts with a higher proportion of young voters are less hawkish*

Lastly, if there is no relationship between the size of the young constituency in electoral districts and the attitudes of politicians elected in the districts, it will support the null hypothesis (denoted by  $H_0$ ) that the size of young voters in electoral districts is irrelevant to the attitudes of politicians, which suggests that there exists no generational difference between younger and older voters regarding defense policies. If this is the case, significant value change from traditional pacifism to militaristic nationalism in Japan should be less likely to happen.

*H0: The size of the young constituency in electoral districts is not related to the hawkishness of politicians elected in the districts*

### **Data and Methodology**

In order to test whether there is any relationship between the hawkishness of politicians and the size of the young voters in their electoral districts, first, I selected the politicians for this study. I focused on politicians who were elected and excluded those candidates who lost. Restricting the sample to only elected candidates is necessary because this study requires only those whose policy attitudes reflect the preferences of their constituencies. In other words, those who lost, especially the candidates who had little prospects to win but joined the race anyway, do not represent their constituencies; their attitudes do not reflect the preferences of their constituents either. Hence,

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excluding candidates who failed to win seats in their districts is suitable for the purpose of this study, which is to know the preferences of young voters through the observations of the attitudes of elected candidates that vary in proportion to the size of their young constituencies.

I also excluded politicians in both the House of Representatives (HOR) and the House of Councillors (HOC) who were elected by proportional representation (PR) because voters cast their PR ballot based on the political party, not the quality of individual candidates. In the HOR elections, voters may specify their favorite PR candidate, but it is also possible to cast a ballot for a specific party. Since the purpose of this study is to identify the shared characteristics among the hawkish politicians' electoral districts, I do not include any PR politicians whose individual characteristics matter much less than their party affiliation. Also, it is essential to note that in a HOR election, all members are elected at once, whereas in a HOC election, just half of the members are elected by one triennial election for a fixed six-year term. I excluded the councillors who did not have an election in the election years, as well. This study covers 289 non-PR members of the House of Representatives (hereafter representatives) elected in the 2017 HOR election and 146 non-PR members of the House of Councillors (hereafter councillors, as officially spelled) elected in 2013 and 2016 HOC elections.<sup>6</sup> The total number of research subjects is 435.

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Representatives elected in the 2014 HOR election were excluded, for the data of each electoral district's population per square kilometer was not available for reasons that will be discussed later. Additionally, given that 239 out of 295 non-PR representatives (81.0 percent) were the winners of both 2014 and 2017 HOR elections, including both the 2014 and 2017 HOR election results can bias the statistical results.

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<sup>6</sup> In each HOC election, 73 councillors were elected from prefectural districts that were either single-member districts (SMD) or multimember districts (MMD). The type of each district depends on the size of each prefectural population. Namely, well-populated prefectures

### **Dependent Variable**

The next step was to assign each politician a numerical value that corresponded to the level of each politician's hawkishness, which was necessary to quantitatively analyze the relationship between the hawkishness of politicians and the size of the young constituency in their districts. The UTokyo-Asahi Survey (UTAS) conducted by Masaki Taniguchi of the Graduate Schools for Law and Politics, the University of Tokyo and the Asahi Shimbun served this purpose.<sup>7</sup> The specific surveys I used were the 2017 HOR election candidate survey (Taniguchi 2018) and the HOC elections candidate surveys conducted in 2013 and 2016 (Taniguchi 2013; Taniguchi 2016).

All the survey questions used for this study were required to meet the four criteria below:

1. The survey questions were used in all the three surveys of 2013, 2016, and 2017.
2. The survey questions used the ordered five-point scale (1: agree, 2: somewhat agree, 3: not sure, 4: somewhat disagree, 5: disagree).
3. All the respondents were asked to answer the survey questions because some survey questions limited the respondents who could respond to the survey questions.

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have MMDs; scarcely populated prefectures have SMDs.<sup>7</sup> As noted by Sakaiya (2010), politicians were probably aware that voters would view their responses to decide whom to vote for, since the results of the survey were published in Asahi Shimbun, one of the major newspapers in Japan, before the election. Hence, candidates could use the surveys as a way of appealing to their voters rather than expressing their genuine policy attitudes (6). Nevertheless, since I am interested in the relationship between young voters and what politicians advocated to be elected, whether or not the politicians did what they promised is not important for this study.

4. The survey questions were closely related to the defense policies of Japan so they could be used to differentiate hawkish politicians from pacifist politicians.<sup>8</sup>

Based on these four criteria, I picked the four survey questions (original texts in Japanese are in parentheses) to measure the hawkishness of politicians:

1. Japan's defense capabilities should be further improved. (Nihon no bōei ryoku ha motto kyōka subeki da)
2. Pressure should be given priority over dialogue in dealing with North Korea. (Kita chōsen ni taishite ha taiwa yorimo atsuruyoku wo yūsen subeki da)
3. Japan should not hesitate to launch a preemptive strike if an enemy's attack is imminent. (Takoku kara no kōgeki ga yosō sareru baai niha sensei kōgeki mo tamerau beki deha nai)
4. [I support] the constitutional revision. (Kempō kaisei ni [sansei])

A response to the first question indicates whether the respondent perceived the need to improve Japan's military capabilities in response to the growing threat from neighboring countries. A politician's opposition to the improvement of Japan's military capabilities suggests the respondent did not perceive the need to strengthen forces because they did not acknowledge

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<sup>8</sup> Clearly, the fourth criterion was the most important criterion to decide which survey questions were going to be used. To each survey question, pacifist politicians needed to have a negative response, while hawkish politicians needed to have a positive response. I referred to Samuels' (2007) definition of "normal-nationalists," whose meaning was almost the same as the "hawkish politician" in this paper. According to Samuels, normal-nationalists are those who 1) "are comfortable with the idea that the Japanese military might have to use force as a means of settling international disputes," 2) "support constitutional revision [s]" 3) [and] "believe that incremental improvement of Japan's military security posture is in the nation's longterm interest" (127). Samuels's normal-nationalists share the three attributes that are not shared by pacifists, who oppose Japan's normalization (see also Footnote 2). Accordingly, we can see that all four survey questions refer to one of these three attributes of normalnationalists. The first question is related to the third attribute; the second and third questions are related to the first attribute; the fourth question is related to the second attribute.

Japan's neighboring countries as threatening or they disliked any use of the military approach. Therefore, I defined those who were in favor of the increased military capability in the surveys as "hawkish," since they are in favor of a stronger armed force to deal with the perceived threats.

The second question asked each candidate how Japan should deal with North Korea, which is in dispute with Japan over ongoing issues like the North Korean nuclear and missile tests. Hawkish politicians would prefer using punishments, such as economic sanctions, to rewards in order to stop the North Korean nuclear blackmail, whereas pacifist politicians would prefer more conciliatory approaches and would be more willing to make concessions.

The third question, also related to Japan's policy toward North Korea, helps us see the policy preference of each politician in regard to possible missile attacks from hostile nations. In general, as shown in **Table 1**, not many politicians openly support the acquisition of preemptive strike capabilities, as it is considered so offensive as to risk conflict escalation. One of the few figures who support it is the former Defense Minister Shigeru Ishiba. In a 2003 interview by *The Independent*, Ishiba said he would support Japan's obtainment of the capabilities to strike missile sites in North Korea (McNeill 2003). As *The Independent* identified Ishiba as hawkish in the interview, I also categorize those who were supportive of Japan's use of preemptive strikes as "hawkish politicians."

The fourth question reveals the extent to which each politician is willing to change the "pacifist" constitution. However, supporting the constitutional revision itself is not necessarily an indication of one's hawkishness. Politicians can support the revision of constitutional clauses other than Article 9. Nevertheless, it is useful to differentiate the radical pacifist politicians from others, as the radical pacifists who opposed the revision of Article 9 tend to object to the revision of any part of the constitution whatsoever. Hence, the attitude of a politician toward constitutional revision can be an effective indicator of how hawkish each politician is.

Adding the numerical answers of the four survey questions allows us to see how much each politician is resistant to these



“hawkish policies.” Let  $x$  be the sum of the four responses:  $a$ ,  $b$ ,  $c$ , and  $d$ .<sup>7</sup>

$$a + b + c + d = x$$

Since each answer ranges from 1 to 5, the sum,  $x$  ranges from 4 to 20. Now, a larger value of  $x$  indicates the stronger resistance to one of the four hawkish policies

$$4 \leq x \leq 20$$

However, it is confusing that a larger value indicates being less hawkish. I want to assign each politician a value that tells us how hawkish the politician is. Namely, a larger value should indicate a more hawkish attitude of the politician. Hence, first, I subtracted 20 from  $x$ , as shown below.

$$-16 \leq x - 20 \leq 0$$

Finally, by multiplying the value  $x-20$  by  $-1$ , I create the “hawkish index,” whose value (i.e., hawkishness) is larger when the politician is more hawkish. Now, 0 indicates the least hawkish attitude of a politician, while 16 indicates the most hawkish attitude of a politician.<sup>8</sup>

$$0 \leq -(x - 20) \leq 16$$

Response	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
5	12	14	72	28
4	12	27	50	28
3	68	116	203	30
2	148	135	81	85
1	189	135	13	254
NA	6	8	16	10

<sup>7</sup> See Table 1 for the survey results.

<sup>8</sup> See Figure 2 for the distribution of the hawkishness of politicians.

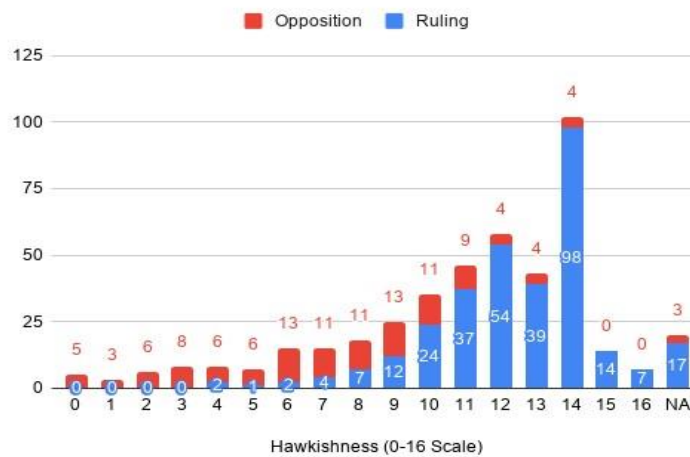
Table 1: The survey results of politicians elected in 2013, 2016, and 2017. It shows that the majority of politicians viewed the first, second, and fourth policies positively, while fewer politicians were willing to advocate the third policy, Japan’s acquisition of preemptive strike capabilities.

### Independent Variable

To begin with, I determined until what ages of voters should be considered as “young.” In this study, I categorized those who have the right to vote and are under 40 years old (i.e., from 18 to 39 years old in 2016 and 2017 and from 20 to 39 years old in

2013) as “young voters.” Although this categorization is admittedly arbitrary, Sankei News mentioned above also categorizes the group of 18-19 years old, the twenties, and the thirties as “young” Japanese. Using the same definition of “young” allows me to examine the report of the Sankei News.

Figure 2: Bar charts showing the distributions of the hawkishness of elected politicians to each survey question. NA indicates that a politician did not respond to all the specific four survey questions.

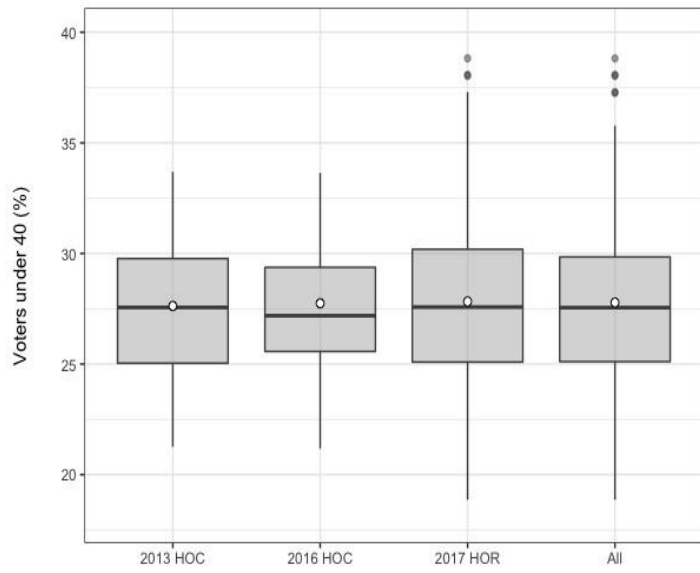


The next step was to acquire the demographic data of all the electoral districts and calculate the proportion of the young voters in every single electorate. For the 2017 HOR election, I used the demographic data provided by Akira Nishizawa at the Center for Special Information Science University of Tokyo, which shows the populations of different age groups in all 289 single-member districts (SMDs) in 2017 (Nishizawa 2017). In the HOC elections, at least one seat is assigned to each prefecture’s at-large district,

except in 2016, when Kochi, Tokushima, Shimane, and Tottori prefectures were combined into two electoral districts (Kochi-Tokushima district and Tottori-Shimane district) because of their scarce populations. For the 2013 and 2016 HOR election, I use data from the e-Stat administered by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication (e-stat 2013; e-stat 2016). The datasets contain estimates of the populations of different age groups in each prefecture. However, e-Stat's datasets show only the populations in units of 1000 people, since a national census is conducted only once in five years. As a result, the percentage of each age group is less accurate, as the sum does not amount to exactly 100 percent.

I obtained the populations of the voters aged 18-19 in each electoral district from the dataset provided by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication (2016) and added them to the group that included the twenties and thirties in the 2016 HOR election. As for HOR 2017 election, however, it was impossible to acquire the demographic data of the populations of voters from 18 to 19 years old in all 289 districts. Hence, I multiplied the numbers of the population aged 15-19 in each electoral district by 2/5 to estimate the approximate size of each electorate's 18 to 19-year-old population. After summing the populations of these three groups of young voters, I calculated the proportion of young voters under 40 in each electoral district. Those who did not have the right to vote (0~19 years old in 2013; 0~17 years old in 2016 and 2017) were excluded from this calculation. The independent variable was named "Voters under 40 (%)." As shown in **Figure 3**, the proportion of young voters in electoral districts ranges from 18.86 to 38.82 percent.

Figure 3: Box plots showing the distributions of the proportions of young voters in electoral districts. White circles within the boxes show the average size of the young constituency. An MMD, in which x number of politicians were elected, is counted as x number of different districts with the same values. The 2017 HOR election's district data has three outliers, whose proportions of young voters were 38.02, 38.08, and 38.82 percent. All the elections' district data have two additional outliers: two districts with 37.26 and 37.30 percent young voters.



### Control Variables

I controlled for the proportion of female voters in each electoral district of both the HOC and HOR elections.<sup>9</sup> The demographic data of 2016 created by MIAC does not include the populations of teenage voters (who became eligible to vote in the 2016 HOC election) by gender in each prefecture. Hence, I used the estimates made by Recruit Shingaku Soken (2015), which shows the approximate number of eighteen-year-old female citizens in 2015 (who would turn 19 years old at the time of the 2016 HOC election) and in 2016. The 18 to 19-year-old female populations in the 2017 HOR election were calculated by multiplying the 15 to 19-year-old female population by 2/5 in each district.

Another control variable is population density. I divided the population of each electoral district by the area of the district in square kilometers (km<sup>2</sup>). Generally speaking, urban areas should be densely populated, and young people should be more populous in urban areas as well. Hence, it is crucial to control for population density to isolate the influence of the young voters from that of the electoral district's population density. The highest population density in an electoral district was 20106.7 people per square kilometer while the lowest was 23.6 people per square kilometer.

Since this study is analyzing the age and gender of voters, it is essential to control for the politician's age and gender as well. As for the gender of politicians, it was coded as 1 if it was a female candidate, and 0 otherwise. Because the HOC 2013 dataset did not include the information about the ages of candidates, I also used the dataset provided by Ko Maeda that contained the information about the ages of politicians (2013).

I also controlled for whether the election was the HOC election or the HOR election to see the differences between the representatives and the councillors. If the politician was a representative, it was coded as 1. If the politician was a councillor, it was coded as 0.

As mentioned, the minimum age to vote was lowered to 18 years old since the 2016 election. I controlled for whether the

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<sup>9</sup> For the descriptive statistics on the percentage of female voters, see Appendix I.

demographic aged 18-19 were eligible to vote. It was coded as 1 if the candidate was elected in either 2016 or 2017 elections, after the lowering of the minimum age to vote, and 0 otherwise.

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Controlling for the politician's party membership is also crucial because the hawkishness of a politician could be related to which party he or she belonged. I controlled for membership in the LDP, the ruling party, and the Clean Government Party (CGP), the LDP's coalition partner. In the three general elections, 318 out of 435 elected candidates (73.1 percent) were either members of the LDP or the CGP. If a candidate belonged to the LDP, it was coded as 1; otherwise, it was coded as 0. In the same manner, if a candidate belonged to the CGP, it was coded as 1; otherwise, it was coded as 0. I did not control for every opposition party membership because the platforms of the opposition forces, which amount to only 117 out of 435 research subjects of this study (27.9 percent), had been so diversified. Overall, there exist eight different opposition parties (not including a minor party) that were much smaller than the LDP.<sup>10</sup> Hence, controlling all of them would be statistically inefficient.

The eight control variables mentioned above are named as follows:

1. Female Voters (%)
2. Population Density (km<sup>2</sup>)
3. Politician's Age
4. Female Politicians (Binary)
5. HOR (Binary)

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<sup>10</sup> See Appendix II for the names of parties that won seats in the three elections.

6. Min. Voting Age (Binary)
7. LDP Membership (Binary)
8. CGP Membership (Binary)

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## Results

Based on the assumption that the attitudes of candidates elected in districts with a higher proportion of young voters should reflect the preferences of young voters, this study expected to find a positive relationship between the hawkishness of the candidates and their districts' proportion of young voters who were also said to be hawkish. By using R (statistical software), a bivariate regression model (Model 1 in Table 2) and a multivariate regression model (Model 2 in Table 2) that controlled for the eight variables discussed in the previous section tested the main hypothesis (*H1*): politicians elected in districts with a higher proportion of young voters tend to be more hawkish. Both models, however, supported the counter hypothesis *H2*: politicians elected in districts with a higher proportion of young voters tend to be less hawkish. There was a negative relationship between the hawkishness of elected candidates and the size of their young constituencies. In addition, Model 2 produced a more statistically significant ( $p < 0.01$ ) result than Model 1 ( $p < 0.1$ ).

	Dependent Variables:	
	Model 1 (standard error)	Model 2 (standard error)
Voters under 40 (%)	-0.085* (0.049)	-0.147*** (0.050)
Female Voters (%)		-0.216** (0.098)
Population Density (km <sup>2</sup> )		0.0001*** (0.00004)
Politician's Age		-0.026** (0.011)
Female Politicians (Binary)		-0.834** (0.366)
HOR (Binary)		1.055*** (0.389)
Min. Voting Age 18 (Binary)		0.647* (0.389)
LDP Member (Binary)		5.085*** (0.261)
CGP Member (Binary)		0.466 (0.575)
Constant	13.289*** (1.377)	22.761*** (5.930)
Observations	415	415
R <sup>2</sup>	0.007	0.586
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.005	0.577
Residual Std. Error	3.468 (df = 413)	2.261 (df = 405)
F Statistic	3.008* (df = 1; 413)	63.766*** (df = 9; 405)

Note: \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

Table 2: Bivariate and multivariate regression models. Observations with NAs discussed in Figure 2 were removed. Both models show the negative correlation between the size of young constituency and the politician's hawkishness

The decrease in the hawkishness of politicians due to the increase in the proportion of young voters was greater in Model 2, which estimated that an increase in the proportion of young voters by one percent would cause a decrease in the politician's hawkishness by 0.147. The estimate of Model 1 was more moderate, as it is estimated that an increase in the proportion of young voters by one percent would cause a decrease of 0.085.

It is also important to note that Model 2 showed that politicians elected in densely populated urban districts were more hawkish even though the reason is unclear. As shown in **Figure 4**, well-populated urban areas have a younger population, while sparsely populated rural areas have a less young population. Hence, in the real world, while having a higher proportion of young voters would cause a decrease in the hawkishness of elected politicians, the negative effect will be weakened by the increase in the



hawkishness of politicians caused by higher population densities. Hypothetically, politicians elected in an electoral district with a smaller young constituency and a higher population density will be the most hawkish.

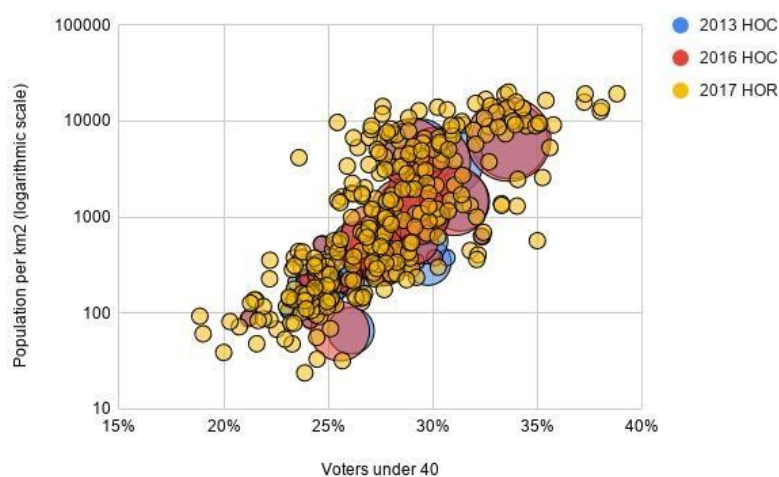


Figure 4: The electoral district's population per square kilometer and its proportion of young voters. The correlation coefficient of the two variables was 0.65. The size of each circle represents the number of seats assigned to each district. All the districts in the HOR election were SMDs, while 29 out of 92 districts in the HOC elections were MMDs. See Appendix I for the summary statistics.

To sum up, neither the bivariate and multivariate models supported the main hypothesis *H1* that politicians elected in districts with a higher proportion of young voters tend to be more hawkish. Both models found that politicians having a large young constituency in their districts tended to be less hawkish. Namely, the presence of a larger young constituency in electoral districts led to the election of less hawkish candidates. As discussed in the Hypotheses section, this finding suggests that Japan's transformation from a pacifist country to a militarist country is unlikely to take place. It is even possible that pacifism may be on the rise again in Japan as more and more of the older voters, who are found to be more hawkish, will be replaced with younger ones who are more pacifistic.

## Discussion

How could it be possible that Japanese youth were supportive of the pacifist policies of Japan even though they were often regarded

as conservative? One possible answer is that Japanese youth incorrectly believed they were conservative even though they were liberal or pacifistic. The study conducted by Inamasu and Miura (2015) shows that more college students who took an online survey describe themselves as “conservatives” (*hoshuteki*) than working adults. At first glance, it seems to be the evidence of the conservative tendency of Japanese youth. Nevertheless, they also found that many college students supported policies that contradict their ideological self-positioning (58-60). Namely, many of those who described themselves as “conservative” took the liberal position regarding ongoing political issues. Moreover, the study revealed that college students were more likely to do so when they were asked about their ideological stance regarding security issues, such as the constitutional revision and Japan’s right of collective self-defense. Hence, it is possible to argue that the conservative shift of Japanese youth had never happened even if the Japanese youth themselves claimed that they are conservative.

Still, it is difficult to tell why Japanese youth are more supportive of pacifist policies than older ones. It would not necessarily mean that Japanese youth are insensitive to external threats. Through the analysis of the Cabinet Office’s public opinion polls, Marushige (2009) found that Japanese youth are more likely to think that the risk of war that involves Japan is high (6). Possibly, although Japanese youth do perceive threats from foreign countries, they do not believe in the efficacy of stronger defense policies in avoiding wars. Instead, they may consider nonmilitaristic approaches more effective in settling international disputes with neighboring countries. Marushige’s other finding that on average, the majority of Japanese youth were indifferent to the issues related to the SDF and national security (7) may support this idea. Arguably, it is because Japanese youth are optimists who think it is possible to resolve any disputes with other countries without using armed forces, and this made them reluctant to support changes to the pacifist policies of Japan in the recent elections.

In addition, to Japanese youth, pacifism and nationalism may not be dichotomous. Namely, Japanese youth can be pacifists while being “nationalistic” or feeling positive about their own national identity. This was not the case in the past, as Japanese youth who participated in or supported the anti-war and antigovernment movements in the 1960s probably did not view their own national

identity positively since they wanted to change the conservative Japanese regime. Today's Japanese youth do not seek regime change, as they are satisfied with the status quo. The rise in the importance for Japanese identity among Japanese youth may be the reflection of their support for the status quo, which could contribute to the common impression that Japanese youth are conservative and nationalistic. Meanwhile, their support for the status quo also indicates their reluctance to support any changes, including Japan's departure from postwar pacifism. As a result, Japanese youth appear to be both nationalistic and pacifistic. It implies that the rise of Japanese nationalism would not drive Japanese youth to support hawkish policies or normalization of Japan unless devastating armed conflicts involving Japan take place, and Japanese youth recognize the need to strengthen their country militarily as a way to protect their own national identity.

### Limitations

One limitation of this study is that it is difficult to know either Japanese youth have become less supportive of hawkish politicians or have not been supportive of hawkish politicians at all from the beginning. The analysis of elections prior to the 2013 HOC election would be necessary to see if the relationship between the size of the young constituency and the hawkishness of politicians has changed over time. However, since the candidate surveys started with the 2003 HOR election, no data prior to the 2003 election is available. Hence, researchers should continuously monitor future elections for any changes in the relationship.

Another limitation of this study is that the research design was not able to take into consideration the relatively low voter turnout of young Japanese in recent elections. **Figure 5** shows that the turnout rates of the three groups of voters under age 40 were lower than 50 percent, while the overall turnout rate was around 50 percent in the four elections from 2013 to 2017. Surprisingly, just one-third of Japanese voters in the twenties cast ballots in these elections. Politicians may ignore young voters and perceive less need to cater to their demands if they know the majority of young voters are not going to vote. In such a situation, using the number of young voters who went to vote instead of the

number of young voters who just live within the electoral districts would have produced more accurate and reliable analytical results. However, it was impossible to know the turnout rate of young voters in every SMD of the 2017 HOR election. The compromise in the research design was necessary due to the lack of a desirable dataset.

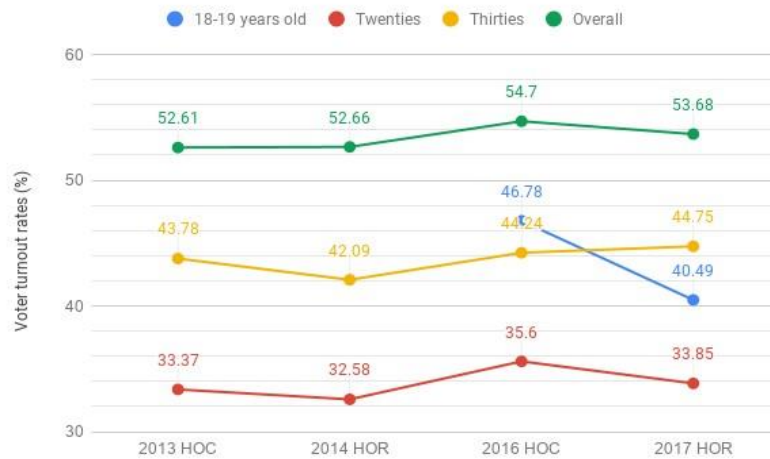


Figure 5: Voter turnout rates in the four general elections. The 2014 HOR election was not included in this study. The voters aged 18 to 19 years old were added since 2016, as the minimum age to vote was lowered to 18 in the 2016 HOC election. Data obtained from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, “Kokusei senkyo no nendai betsu tōhyō ritsu no suii ni tsuite” [The Changes in the Voter Turnouts of Different Age Groups], [www.soumu.go.jp/senkyo/senkyo\\_s/news/sonota/nendaibetu/](http://www.soumu.go.jp/senkyo/senkyo_s/news/sonota/nendaibetu/).

## Conclusion

To examine the argument that Japanese youth were conservative and nationalistic, this study tested the hypothesis that politicians elected in districts with a higher proportion of young voters were more hawkish. However, none of the statistical models in this study supported the main hypothesis. Those models showed that politicians elected in districts with a higher proportion of young voters were less hawkish, which implies that having more young voters hindered the election of hawkish politicians.

These results cast doubt on the validity of the argument that Japanese youth are conservative and nationalistic, and it supports the conventional view that young people are less conservative and

more pacifist in Japan. Hence, I conclude that young people did not enthusiastically want Japan to be a “normal nation,” unlike hawkish politicians who currently dominate the Diet. Even if more and more older Japanese are going to be replaced with younger ones, the rapid decline of pacifism in Japan is unlikely to take place in the future, as this article found that Japanese youth were even more resistant to changing the pacifist policies of Japan than their older counterparts. In the future, researchers should consider the turnout rates of young voters in all the electoral districts and analyze how the observed relationship between the size of the young constituency and the hawkishness of elected politicians have changed and will change over time.

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## Appendix I: Summary statistics of districts

### 1. Summary statistics of all districts

Statistics	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Number of Voters	381	839,809	1,394,028	237,776	11,743,214
Voters under 40 (%)	381	27.52	3.50	18.86	38.82
Female Voters (%)	381	52.01	1.38	47.26	55.01
Population/km <sup>2</sup>	381	2518.5	4049.5	23.6	20106.7
Number of Seats	381	1.1	0.6	1.0	6.0

### 2. Summary statistics of districts in the 2017 election

Statistics	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Number of Voters	47	2,231,149	2,249,803	474,000	11,258,000
Voters under 40 (%)	47	26.55	2.70	21.26	33.69

Female Voters (%)	4	52.48	1.18	50.19	54.27
Population/km <sup>2</sup>	4	673.0	1206.2	65.1	6321.3
Number of Seats	4	1.6	1.0	1.0	5.0

### 3. Summary statistics of districts in the 2017 HOR election

Statistics	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Number of Voters	4	2,388,89	2,345,52	654,86	11,743,21
Voters under 40 (%)	5	7	1	0	4
Female Voters (%)	4	26.57	2.53	21.18	33.65
Population/km <sup>2</sup>	5	52.30	1.18	50.23	54.05
Number of Seats	4	698.2	1246.7	64.1	6475.3
	5	1.6	1.2	1.0	6.0

### 4. Summary statistics of SMDs in the 2017 HOR election

Statistics	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Number of Voters	289	372,328	70,552	237,776	505,080
Voters under 40 (%)	289	27.83	3.70	18.86	38.82
Female Voters (%)	289	51.89	1.41	47.26	55.01
Population/km <sup>2</sup>	289	3102.1	4444.3	23.6	20106.7
Number of Seats	289	1.0	0.0	1.0	1.0

**Appendix II: Numbers of non-PR seats won by each party in the 2013, 2016, and 2017 elections (numbers of seats won by female candidates are put in parentheses)**

Party	2013 Total	2016 Total	2017 Total
Clean Government Party (CGP: Ruling party)	4 (1)	7 (3)	8 (0)
Constitutional Democratic Party (CDP)	NA	NA	17 (5)
Democratic Party (DP)	NA	21 (6)	NA
Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) <sup>13</sup>	10 (1)	NA	NA
Democratic Socialist Party (DSP)	0	0	1 (0)
Japan Communist Party (JCP)	3 (2)	1 (0)	1 (0)
Liberal Democratic Party (LDP: Ruling party)	47 (4)	37 (5)	215 (12)
Minna no Tō (Minna)	4 (2)	NA	NA
<hr/>			
<sup>13</sup> The Democratic Party of Japan, which was the ruling party from 2009 to 2012, changed its name to the Democratic Party before the 2016 HOC election. The Democratic Party split into the right-leaning Party of Hope and the left-leaning Constitutional Democratic Party right before the 2017 HOR election.			
Nippon Ishin no Kai (Ishin) <sup>14</sup>	2 (0)	3 (1)	3 (0)
Party of Hope (POH)	NA	NA	18 (1)
<hr/>			
Independent candidates <sup>11</sup>	2 (0)	4 (2)	26 (5)
Minor parties	1 (1)	0	0

<sup>11</sup> This category includes Yato-kyoto (opposition front) candidates, who were endorsed by opposition parties to compete with candidates from the ruling parties.

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<sup>14</sup>

The party name was Nippon Ishin no Kai when the 2013 HOC election was held. Later, it was renamed as Osaka Ishin no Kai before the 2016 HOC election, but the party was again named as Nippon Ishin no Kai after the 2016 HOC election.