

# Contemporary Japanese Politics and Anxiety Over Governance

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## Introduction

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# Introduction

Complex structural changes occurring in the foundations of Japan's political landscape in the early 21st century are revealed through the six chapters of this volume. We will demonstrate a loss of the social-relational basis for voting and political participation, a weakening of grassroots support, a decoupling of social capital from politics, and a hollowing out of the influence of prospective expectations on voting that has been evident since the beginning of this century (Chapter 1), and a narrowing of the range of political alternatives that citizens perceive in the choice of candidates to represent their political will, resulting in a loss of perceived meaningfulness of political participation (Chapter 2). In addition, inconsistency in the balance of importance between Asian values and liberal democratic values, on which the Japanese rely, influences Japanese political behavior. That is, this inconsistency has been observed to affect Japanese political behavior in a context-dependent manner (Chapter 3), and the robust expression of "anxiety over governance," which is a diffuse social/political anxiety that is over-inflated relative to objective risk, has been consistently observed (Chapter 4). In this context, the COVID-19 pandemic makes anxiety over governance evident on the surface of society, and people are shocked by the policy that cannot effectively resist the crisis (Chapter 5). The final chapter, Chapter 6, synthesizes the entire volume and considers the future of anxiety over governance.

## **Sociocultural and international contexts of incumbency changes and the COVID-19 crisis in Japan**

### *The early stage of the COVID-19 crisis and anxiety over governance*

The COVID-19 pandemic struck Japan in February 2020. Japan was among the first places in the world to be affected,<sup>1</sup> although the government tried to avoid it. At the end of January, chartered flights were sent to inland China to evacuate Japanese residents. In early February, the *Diamond Princess* cruise ship returned to the Port of Yokohama after the discovery of infected people, and all passengers and crew were quarantined and isolated for 14 days. However, the mass infection on board the ship spread rapidly, eventually causing more than 700 infections and 13 deaths, and a sense of crisis quickly arose in the country.

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The number of infected people in Japan spread gradually in late February, and the government set up a specialized taskforce to combat the disease. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe also took the initiative to refrain from holding events for two weeks and requested the temporary closure of elementary and junior high schools across the country. Nevertheless, the disease continued to spread. The fear peaked at the end of March with the symbolic COVID-19 death of recognized national comedian Ken Shimura. As if prompted by his death, the Prime Minister issued a “state of emergency” declaration in early April. The declaration was first issued for a period of one month for major metropolitan areas (seven out of 47 prefectures) and was expanded to cover the entire country in mid-April. This situation was later called the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. In response to the infection situation, the deadline for the declaration was extended until the end of May, and then it was lifted in stages.

The declaration of a state of emergency is a request for “self-restraint” and changes in behavior without any mandatory regulations. It is a request by the government to control the flow of people to stop the spread of the disease. The main measures were for citizens to refrain from going out and moving around unnecessarily, holding events and functions, and using facilities that are prone to infection (shortening the opening hours of restaurants and refraining from serving alcohol and food), and to promote telework and online education. The declaration does not involve coercive measures or legal restrictions as seen in the so-called “lock-down.” Many citizens voluntarily complied with the request, and social activities were sharply curtailed. Travel within and between countries and regions was drastically reduced, and the economy and tourism suffered a huge blow. Needless to say, daily life changed drastically, and every part of the country was in a state of breathless anticipation.

This major shift in citizens’ daily lives was accompanied by a failure to grasp the situation fully. They stayed in their homes, unable to determine the seriousness of the threat of infection and without a clear vision of the future of the government’s measures. In the midst of this ambiguous fear, a number of false rumors spread, such as easy countermeasures against infection (drinking warm water, etc.), conspiracy theories about the outbreak, and predictions about the cancellation of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games. Among them, a false allegation was propagated on Twitter that toilet paper, a daily necessity, would disappear from the stores. This was picked up by the mass media and caused a huge uproar.<sup>2</sup> The fear of running out of a daily necessity may seem trivial when compared with the lockdowns and death tolls in the US and Europe during this period. The infection in Japan was far more contained. However, even with the Prime Minister’s announcement that Japan had plenty of toilet paper in stock, the furor did not abate for a month. This huge disparity between the magnitude of the scare and the reality of the relatively controlled spread of the infection provides a significant instance of the research topic in this book because it is a typical and deep-rooted manifestation of “anxiety over governance” in Japanese politics. Let us examine it more closely.

At the beginning of May, while Japan was still under the declaration of a state of emergency, the YouGov site (<https://yougov.co.uk/covid-19>) had already

updated its international comparative data on public reactions to the COVID-19 outbreak several times.<sup>3</sup> Regular surveys were published from about 20 countries including Japan, other countries in Asia, the US, and countries in Europe, and the data revealed the psychological state of the Japanese citizens, indicating the anxiety over governance that is the subject of this book. While the Japanese ratings of the perceived threat (fear of COVID-19) are among the highest in international comparisons, their evaluation of the government's countermeasures is among the lowest. Figure 0.1 shows a scatterplot of the relationship between the two. The Japanese people are outliers relative to citizens of other countries; their fear of COVID was positively correlated with their high evaluation of government.<sup>4</sup>

Given Japan's small number of deaths and infections relative to other countries in this period, the public's fear of infection was unusually high, considering that Spain, France, and the US, which show similarly low ratings of their governments but with less fear, had 44, 45, and 127 times as many deaths as Japan, respectively (as of early [3rd of] May 2020).

It has been well known since the end of the 20th century that Japanese people's distrust of politics and politicians is as high as that in developed countries around the world (Pharr & Putnam, 2000). However, the phenomenon emerging from the COVID-19 crisis is not observed in other countries.

In this book, we explore this phenomenon by conceptualizing it in terms of "anxiety over governance." This refers to a psychological state in which citizens do not trust the measures taken by the government in response to a problem or lack confidence in its ability to respond in the future, resulting in a strong sense of insecurity and crisis that far outweighs the actual risk. This state of mind can lead to severe criticism of the country's governance, loss of sensitivity and

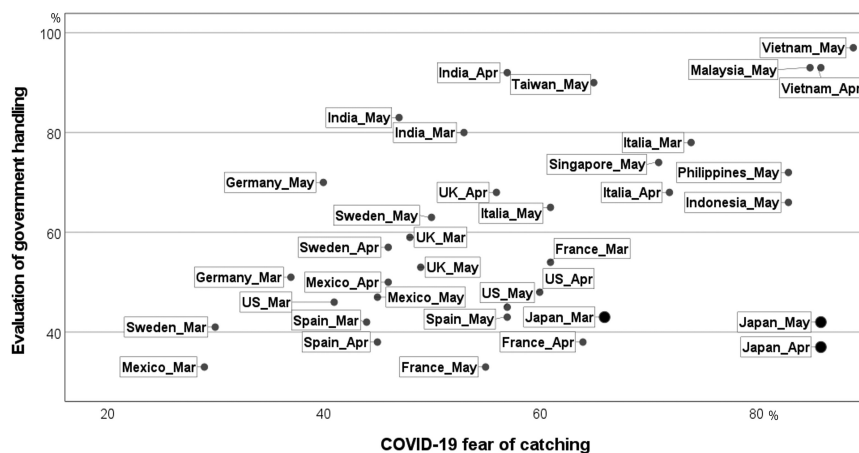


Figure 0.1 Scatter diagram of fear of COVID-19 and evaluation of government (from mid-March to early May 2020). (Source: YouGov COVID-19 Public Monitor survey.) Note: The figures on both axes refer to the percentages of survey respondents who are fearful/approving of the government's response.

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responsiveness of citizens to evaluate the adequacy of measures, loss of political efficacy, doubts about the functioning of politics in the country, and excessive pessimism about the country's future and prospects. These doubts and pessimism in turn lead to more anxiety. In other words, there is a major problem not only with the high level of anxiety but also with the consequences of the negative spiral it brings. To clarify the composition and configuration of this problem, this book does not assume that the Japanese people's anxiety over governance, which also emerged during the COVID-19 crisis, is caused by the experience of years of misconduct in politics or a subjective bias in risk perception. Japanese distrust of politics and risk aversion are widely known. However, their anxiety over governance is different in nature. This is what we explore in this book. This is diffuse anxiety over *future* governance resulting from decades of multifaceted structural change and dysfunction in the Japanese political process.

To be sure, anxiety over governance is different from distrust in politics. Whereas political distrust is a reaction to past problems created by governments, politicians, and administrations (e.g., policy failures or politicians' misconduct), anxiety over governance is a phenomenon whereby people feel that they do not know what governments and politicians can do to solve possible future problems, and they perceive a very high risk in trusting them to lead future governance. In other words, it is a phenomenon of being unable to rely on the overall pattern of politics and the direction of government in terms of political prospects rather than its past. It is not distrust in politics, which is a performance evaluation of the past negative events in politics, but an anxious gaze toward the future.

The roots of this anxiety are deep. This is because anxiety over future governance is based on the accumulation over time of structural changes in political reality. Throughout the chapters of this book, we seek to uncover the emergence of anxiety over governance, rather than political distrust, by examining the trajectory of Japanese politics over the past four decades, focusing on the first full-scale change of government experienced by the Japanese people in the 21st century, and in doing so reveal the roots of this phenomenon.

### ***Multiple large-scale horizontal and vertical survey datasets, and more***

From an empirical analytic perspective, this book places the present situation of Japan in the context of international comparative surveys on Asian and global scales to help readers understand the relative positions of Japanese citizens in the world political landscape in the post-Heisei period, that is, the Reiwa era (from 2019). The book also draws extensively on domestic national survey analyses over a long time period. In other words, we use "horizontal" and "vertical" survey datasets.

The vertical data cover the maximum 45-year time span of national election surveys conducted in Japan. These are primarily concerned with elections, political participation, and political attitudes captured by the 1976 JABISS survey, the JES surveys (1983–2019), and the CSES Japan surveys (1996–2018), with an additional 2021 Internet survey. JABISS is an acronym for Joji, Bradley, Ichiro, Scott,

and Shinsaku (first names of those who conducted the survey as a joint project of American and Japanese scholars, and “JA” may also mean Japan and America). JES and CSES are acronyms of the Japanese Election Study and Comparative Study of Electoral Systems, respectively. JES surveys are Japan’s counterpart to the US ANES (American National Election Studies) and have been conducted as JES (1983), JES II (1993–1996), JES III (2001–2007), JES IV (2007–2012), JES V (2012–2016), and JES VI (2017–2019).<sup>5</sup>

The horizontal data will expand the geographical scope beyond Japan using comparative datasets from the Asian Barometer Survey (ABS) waves 1–5, enabling a comparison of 59 surveys in 14 countries in East and Southeast Asia over five waves from 2001 to 2019, and from the World Values Survey (WVS) waves 3–7 conducted from 1995 to 2020 and allow comparisons of a maximum of 214 surveys from 73 countries around the world. Those analyses extend the book content beyond Japan, providing a multicultural and empirical understanding of East versus West differences and similarities, and locate Japan in an international context.

Finally, by using a further comparative dataset, called the Values in a Crisis (VIC) dataset,<sup>6</sup> the first half of Chapter 5 is written about the struggle against the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, as a typical example of the book’s main theme, Japanese citizens’ anxiety over governance. The latter half of the chapter focuses on the Japanese general election on the last day of October 2021, held in the final stage of the huge fifth wave of COVID-19, using an Internet survey to show the overall structure of anxiety over governance.

### ***Main targets of contemporary Japanese politics and citizens***

In chronological terms, this book is intended to cover the political reality during the latter half of the Heisei era (2005–2019) following the Prime Minister Koizumi “postal privatization election,” the change of government to the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), the return to the LDP (Liberal Democratic Party) incumbency, and the long Abe premiership of the LDP. Then it explores the struggle with the COVID-19 crisis in 2020 and 2021, the last phase of the long-lasting Abe administration, a year short succession of the Suga administration, and the initial phase of the Kishida administration, respectively.

To provide a bird’s-eye view of the structure of Japanese politics in these years, we start the book by highlighting the social-environmental, political, and sociocultural changes that underlie the long-term political participation and voting behavior of Japanese citizens. Then, it proceeds to examine these changes from a multilayered theoretical perspective, including a combined model of social capital and political actors determining voter participation, a double-constraint decision-making model of party choice and perceived meaningfulness of choice, two political culture models based on Asian values and global cultural maps (models of the conflicting positions of the Japanese), and a new conceptual framework of anxiety over governance, which will finally integrate all of the chapters.

In the following section, the overall structure of the book will be introduced, with further details on each chapter.

### **Introduction to the chapters**

#### *Chapter 1: Social capital, political actors, and vote choice*

In Chapter 1, we examine the change of government from the LDP to the DPJ in 2009, contrasting it with four sets of election studies: (1) a survey on the postal privatization election in 2005, i.e., before the DPJ assumed power; (2) the 2010 election survey and a non-election time survey in 2011, both under the DPJ government; (3) the 2012 election that returned the LDP to power, as well as the 2013, 2016, and 2019 elections under the long-serving Abe LDP government; and finally (4) back to the elections before the 21st century, i.e., the 1983 and 1995 election surveys, both of which are rare datasets in these eras and thus provide important insights on the elections thereafter.

The 2009 election was the only election in post-World War II Japanese history where most voters were firmly aware of the possible change of government from the long-term incumbent LDP to the new progressive party, that is, the DPJ.<sup>7</sup> Although this change of government triggered huge policy and administrative changes, after three years it proved to be a miserable failure and the LDP politicians returned. The Great East Japan Earthquake and the Fukushima nuclear power plant accident in March 2011 accelerated the failure. Chapter 1 analyzes this change of government as the key to the social-environmental and political changes in Japanese politics in the latter half of the Heisei era.

Before analyzing the elections, this chapter provides an overview of long-term survey data in Japan concerning the political implications of social-environmental factors. This is because Japan has been considered to have strong groups and organizations; however, this has not always been the case in recent years. We examine voters' perceptions of social-environmental factors, including social capital, in terms of the chronology of change over the longest period that can be explored, from 1976 to 2019.

Perceptions of political actors are the other major factors discussed in this chapter. These are a group of political as opposed to social-environmental factors. Typically, regarding the perceived ability of parties, we identify the upheaval and eventual crash of the perceived ability of the DPJ compared with the generally high ratings of the LDP, regardless of long-term fluctuations between 1996 and 2019. Moreover, we observe waves of changes in retrospective/prospective evaluations of the government (the major political actor) that are linked to votes.

Given these long-term trends, to examine changes in the determinants of the vote, we attempt to view vote choices as decisions made in response to the power of two aspects of politics, namely, political actor factors and voters' perceived social-environmental factors. Examining the 1983–2019 elections with the 2009 incumbent change elections as the key, we find that while the effects of political actor factors were mostly stable and robust, the effects of social capital were not

constant. There was a long-term decline in voter mobilization via social networks, a decline in the vitality of social capital, such as a long-term decline in social and political participation, and a decline in social tolerance.

Furthermore, part of the defeat of the LDP in 2009 was also a defeat by the social capital forces. By contrast, the DPJ won votes and succeeded in changing the government, but not because they were supported by active political participants such as those discussed in social capital theory. The DPJ's victory was not so much about benefiting from social capital, as its majority was gained from voters who did not normally participate in or talk about politics and who had little faith in the political system.

## ***Chapter 2: A theory of latitude of acceptable party choice and a theory of meaningful choices***

Chapter 2 captures the dramatic period of change that followed the introduction of the single-seat constituency system in the House of Representatives elections in 1996. By tracking the elections from 1996 to 2019, this chapter examines how people's decisions to choose political parties in the voting booth<sup>8</sup> are constrained by the "breadth" of the political party configuration and the "latitude" of acceptable party choices. These were discussed originally in Miyake (1985)'s theory of "the range of party support" at the micro level and in "meaningful choices" at the macro level by Schmidt and Wessels (2005). However, these concepts have not been examined in a theoretical manner that organizes and integrates the two theories and provides an overall picture of voters' choice-making. We attempt to clarify this point in an analysis of votes during this period.

Specifically, we develop the theory of the range of party support that Miyake worked on in the 1970s and 1980s and reformulate it as a theory of the latitude of acceptable political parties indicated by a "warm" feeling toward the parties (feeling thermometers) or rejection (parties that are never supported). We then examine the latitude of Japanese attitudes toward political parties, revealing several clusters of voters with different degrees of latitude during this period.

While many clusters centered on acceptance or rejection of the LDP, some with the DPJ at their core were established in the mid-2000s. However, when the LDP returned to power in December 2012, these key clusters centered on the opposition parties, especially the DPJ, are on the verge of disappearing. The clusters with stable latitude including the DPJ-centric preference were lost as a result of mismanagement and disappointment in the party's ability to govern while it was incumbent.

An important observation related to this point is that the JESIII and JESIV panel data reveal similar clusters of voter latitude prevailing in the medium term (four to six years), and there is stability in the corresponding range of party choices. That is why the disappearance of the opposition-centric clusters in 2013 would have a long-term impact on vote choice.

Furthermore, the effect of attitudinal latitude on voting is greater among LDP voters, while for the DPJ, other political selective cues determine vote choice, such as ratings of the leader and the perceived ability of the party.



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The effect of clusters of attitudinal latitude related to the LDP is also clear in relation to perceptions of the macro-political environment, or meaningful choice perceptions. We observe a persistent tendency for perceptions of meaningful choice (of government or voting) to be higher in clusters with positive attitudinal latitude toward the LDP. However, with respect to the DPJ, the effect of meaningful perceptions only comes from the perceived ability of the party and its leaders rather than the attitudinal latitude that includes the party.

### *Chapter 3: Social capital and cultural values*

In Chapter 3, we begin with an overview of the claims regarding Japan's cultural peculiarities and then empirically examine Japan's position on the Asian values and the WVS cultural map based on data from five waves of the ABS 1–5 and five waves of WVS 3–7.

Specifically, we predict that the axes of Asian values (vertical emphasis and harmony orientation) and those of the cultural map (secular and self-expression values) are related to the central factors of social capital such as generalized trust, institutional trust, and political participation, as well as to evaluations of democracy. On this basis, we examine whether Japan tends to differ from other countries because of its deviation from Asian values or its peculiar position on the cultural map.

In the analysis, it is first confirmed that Japan is positioned as the lowest Asian outlier on the two axes of Asian values of public life: i.e., vertical emphasis on a social hierarchy with a clear distinction between the superior and the inferior, and consensus-seeking orientation emphasizing similarity and suppression of dissent. On the map of the WVS global cultural landscape, although Japan is considered to be part of Confucian culture, it is not such an outlier in terms of the two axes (i.e., secular and self-expression values).

In applying the country-fixed effects model, we found that Japanese people are influenced by Asian values in a similar manner to other Asian countries in terms of generalized trust and political participation. They are more or less impacted by harmony orientation and vertical emphasis. However, they deviate from the rest of Asia in terms of evaluation of democracy, showing a tendency to follow the predictions of liberal democracy. To extend the analysis, the effect of the Japanese educational experience is examined. The interpretation is that whereas generalized trust and political participation are more susceptible to the actions and opinions of others with whom people are in daily contact, that is, to the political and cultural climate of social pressure, evaluation of democracy is affected more by education as the institutional framework of enculturation of formal democratic values.

The country-fixed effects model analysis of the WVS finds that the two axes of the world's cultural map (secular and self-expression values) have mostly the predicted effects on social capital and evaluation of democracy but finds no peculiarity in Japanese citizens.

Overall, although the results show the political eclecticism of the Japanese people in terms of Eastern and Western values (the impact of Asian values can

be seen here), they are generally not unique at the global level. The history of Japan's "Westernization," rooted in its liberal democracy and political culture, is clear cut, and education seems to have played a major role in this historical path. Despite this success of education, the political eclecticism of the Japanese remains to be one source contributing to the anxiety over governance, the theme of this entire book.

#### ***Chapter 4: Japanese risk perception and anxiety over governance***

As discussed and glimpsed in the context of the COVID-19 crisis in the first section of this Introduction, anxiety over governance is an anxious gaze at governance, not in the past but in the future. Although Japanese political distrust is deeply rooted, it is rooted in the political problems of Japan's past. By contrast, there is an overriding sense of vague anxiety among Japanese citizens that some mistake in governance might occur, in broader contexts in the near future, such as Japanese involvement in the war, terrorism, or even civil war, or that they might find themselves in a situation that threatens their daily lives, such as losing their jobs or being unable to provide adequate education for their children. These kinds of Japanese over-inflated risk perceptions are very common despite the safety of Japan in terms of objective data (such as its Freedom House score, the Global Peace Index, or ILO [International Labor Organization] data). The phenomenon is not seen in other developed countries and is different from Japan's international position as seen in political distrust. We will show these typical excessive risk perceptions as an index of Japanese anxiety over governance, implying that Japanese people are afraid that the country's government would be too dysfunctional to cope with a (possible) national crisis, leading to unusually high perceived risks. The addition of an "index" indicates the hypothetical nature of the measurement in the sense that the excessive risk perceptions have not yet been fully proved to be related to ratings of governance performance. This is tested partly in Chapter 4 and fully in Chapter 5.

In Chapter 4, we first examine the determinants of an index of anxiety over governance among Japanese citizens using three WVS Japan studies conducted in 2010 (WVS6 [sixth wave of WVS]), 2019 (WVS7), and 2020 (WVS7 repeated). The WVS6 Japan survey was conducted during the DPJ incumbency, and the WVS7 Japan surveys under the LDP government. Thus, the comparison of WVS6 and WVS7 data from Japan provides a clear insight into whether the Japanese "peculiarity" of anxiety over governance is due to its political environmental background rather than the incumbent party in the given period.

A high level of anxiety was repeatedly shown in the surveys, albeit with some fluctuations. It was also found that Japanese people's anxiety over governance as measured by their excessive risk perceptions cannot simply be attributed to extreme anxiety among any particular social group in terms of demographic categories or social capital but rather to Japanese citizens overall. Moreover, importantly, we found that the perception of democracy performance was prominent as a clear contributing factor to perceptions of high risk. This suggests that the index

of anxiety over governance is a function of democratic performance: The lower the perceived performance in Japan, the higher the anxiety over governance.

Next, we examine the cultural/societal contexts in which anxiety over governance in Japan arises by analyzing Japan as a dummy variable in the WVS6 and WVS7 using the country-fixed effects model, which enables us to examine the effects of individual countries.

The results show that the Japanese are unique in the joint effect of two phenomena: (1) the general level of anxiety over governance is high, and (2) the effect of the perceived degree of democracy (democratic performance) is strong.

To further elucidate and conceptually locate the structure of such anxiety over governance, in the final section of Chapter 4, we posited distrust in politics and anxiety over governance as paired concepts that indicate the negative aspects of retrospective evaluation and prospective evaluation of politics introduced by Fiorina (1981). The common characteristic of these negative aspects is their distinctive diffuseness. We predicted that the diffuse negative future expectations would be manifested as excessive risk perception of anxiety over governance in Japan seen above. We formulated three hypotheses.

### ***Chapter 5: The COVID-19 pandemic in the context of anxiety over governance***

This chapter provides not only a case study of the Japanese COVID-19 experience but also two surveys that reveal the structure of anxiety over governance during the crisis.

First, through analyses using a comparative VIC dataset, the impacts of the pandemic on Japanese anxiety over governance will be brought to light from an international perspective. Second, by focusing on the general election in October 2021, just in the phase of the steep decline of the COVID-19 fifth wave, the total structure of anxiety over governance will be examined using an Internet survey, which is applied to test the hypotheses proposed at the end of Chapter 4.

As we trace the chronology of the outbreak of the pandemic in the Japanese context, we observe continual eruptions of anxiety over governance. During the pandemic, despite the relatively low domestic infection rate, the Japanese have regularly expressed skepticism over the government and a lack of trust in its ability to deal with the crisis. The data from YouGov reveal a lack of support for the public health measures implemented by the Japanese government, including the measures that are objectively effective in controlling contact points with infected people and reducing the general likelihood of infection. The Japanese were worried that the government's response and handling were slow, lukewarm, and ineffective.

Using VIC international comparative data on responses to the first wave of the COVID-19 disaster, we again found the structure of anxiety over governance among Japanese people, with high levels of individual fear (despite a relatively low infection/death rate) combined with low evaluations of government that are different from those of citizens in other participant countries. This was consistent

with YouGov data as well. Furthermore, this structure was robust even after controlling for a risk avoidance tendency as a personal characteristic that is well known to be prevalent among the Japanese.

In the fall 2021 House of Representatives election survey, we developed a direct measure of Japanese people's anxiety over governance and proved that it is a strong determinant of how harshly they view the government. In turn, we also demonstrated that the degree of anxiety over governance is the combined result of several malfunctions of Japanese politics described in Chapters 1–3. That is, we tried to show an overall picture of how anxiety over governance is linked to the additive effects of negative changes in the relationship between Japanese social capital and politics in Chapter 1, changes in the narrowed choice of political parties in Chapter 2, and the context-dependent de-Asianization of the Japanese position in terms of cultural values in Chapter 3. By conducting multivariate analyses on the direct measure of anxiety over governance, we finally demonstrated that these are appropriate inferences. The overall tests of the anxiety over governance hypotheses are well supported.

### *Chapter 6: Uncertain political reality and loss of sense of future*

In this final chapter, we look back and examine the landscape of the political reality of Japanese citizens in the latter half of the Heisei era, and then through the analyses of Japanese responses to the COVID-19 experience, we show that a strong sense of anxiety over governance is an excellent explanation of the structure of the political context of Japan.

In the second half of the chapter, we discuss the possibility of overcoming anxiety over governance and examine the possibility of political participation to overcome it.

### Notes

- 1 More than 100 confirmed cumulative cases on 21 February, following China and Korea.
- 2 This false rumor reported that toilet paper would disappear from Japan because the raw material for toilet paper, which is imported from China, would run out owing to the disruption of trade. In reality, the production of toilet paper does not depend on imported raw materials, and there was no basis for the hoax. However, rather than scrutinize the statement on Twitter, the mass media took up the issue of toilet paper disappearing from the market and turned it into an absurd incident.
- 3 The YouGov COVID-19 Public Monitor survey is a long-term global public opinion survey conducted in a number of participating countries. It enables a time-series comparison of perceptions of and responses to the COVID-19 crisis. The Japanese survey began in mid-March. The author would like to acknowledge YouGov for their permission to use the survey data.
- 4 Data are shown for 18 countries in mid-March, mid-April, and early May (37 data points are shown because there were 17 surveys with one rating missing). Though Japan's figures were still close to those of France in mid-March, the COVID-19 death of the comedian in late March caused a surge in fear to the highest level in the world, and the declaration of a state of emergency could not improve evaluations of the gov-

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ernment's handling of the crisis but merely pushed the Japanese position to the bottom right-hand side of the figure.

- 5 The author would like to acknowledge Professor Kobayashi for use of JES V and JES VI datasets.
- 6 The VIC is the *Values in a Crisis* survey, which is a comparative survey on the COVID-19 pandemic (I will use its first-wave surveys conducted around May 2020; 13 countries are currently available for this book). The project is headed by Christian Welzel. The author would like to acknowledge Professor Welzel and the Japanese team (of which the primary investigator is Professor Naoko Taniguchi [Keio University] as well as the Dentsu Institute).
- 7 After the 1993 general election, there was also a change of incumbency from the LDP to opposition parties; however, this occurred somewhat unexpectedly. Although the election results still showed the LDP to be the largest party, it lost power because of the formation of the eight-party coalition government without the LDP, which is very different from what happened in 2009.
- 8 Voters have two ballots to vote and can vote for two parties (if they wish): One for the proportional representation district and the other for the single-member district in the House of Representatives. A similar division of votes is also possible in elections for the House of Councilors. Another notable fact is that Japan has a multiparty system with nine parties that each have at least one seat in either house (after the general election in 2021).

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