【Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (S)】

The erosion of democracy: How to prevent it

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Project Information	Project Number : 23H05426 Project Period (FY) : 2023-2027 Keywords : Democracy, Turnout, Accountability, Polarization, Experiment

Purpose and Background of the Research

●Outline of the Research

Many countries, including Japan, are experiencing the erosion of democracy, exemplified by declining voter turnout, lower government responsiveness, and higher democratic intolerance and polarization. Previous research has examined the nature and causes of these problems, yet little is known about potential solutions to address them. What can be done to increase voter turnout? How can voters select the government based on its performance? How can we foster tolerance among voters? It is an important challenge to answer these questions and share the findings with the global community.

This study aims to answer the above questions by focusing on the erosion of democracy in Japan. We explore the causes of low turnout, low responsiveness, and low tolerance, and then develop proposals to address these problems. Methodologically, we develop a novel survey design using Random Digit Dialing via cell phones in collaboration with a private company, field a face-to-face survey that is a part of the international collaborative survey program, all of which allow us to build large-scale nationally-representative survey data to study voter behavior and attitudes in Japan. Drawing from the findings on the causes of low turnout, low responsiveness, and low tolerance, we propose potential solutions to these problems and test their effectiveness using field experiments.
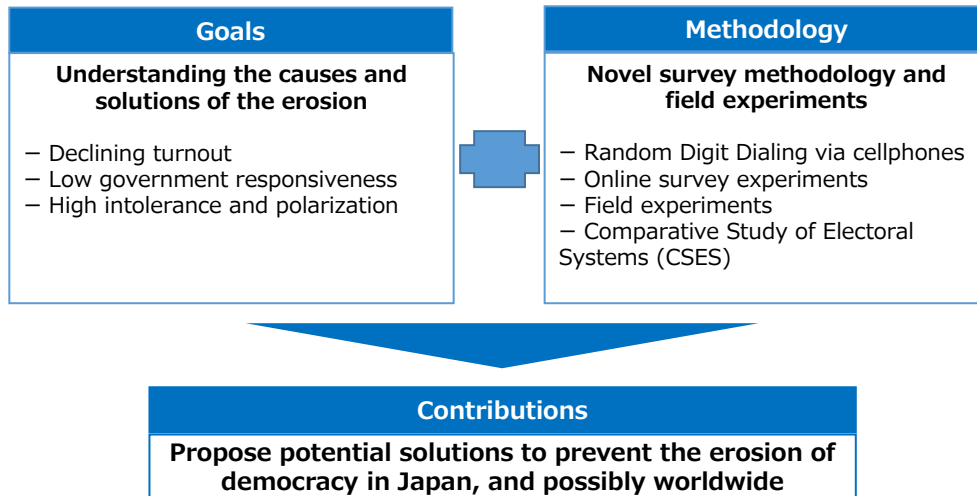
Goals	Methodology
Understanding the causes and solutions of the erosion – Declining turnout – Low government responsiveness – High intolerance and polarization	**Novel survey methodology and field experiments** – Random Digit Dialing via cellphones – Online survey experiments – Field experiments – Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES)

Contributions
Propose potential solutions to prevent the erosion of democracy in Japan, and possibly worldwide

Figure 1. Overview

Expected Research Achievements

●Three research projects

This study aims to answer research questions on low turnout, the absence of retrospective voting, and high intolerance and polarization among voters in Japan. Drawing on the findings that reveal the causes of these problems, we propose potential policy solutions to address them and examine their effectiveness.

Project 1 Low turnout
- ✓ Does economic distress discourage turnout?
- ✓ Does accessible elections encourage turnout even among voters with distress?

Project 2 Absence of retrospective voting
- ✓ Does the absence of effective opposition parties preclude retrospective voting?
- ✓ Does greater party competition mitigate partisan biases?

Project 3 Intolerance and polarization
- ✓ Does SNS promote intolerance and polarization?
- ✓ How does old media shape intolerance and polarization?

Overcome the erosion

Figure 2. Three research projects

●Three methodologies

Our research projects are required to collect large-scale survey data potentially comparable with data from other societies and design field experiments for causal inferences and policy evaluation. This study develops a novel system for Random Digit Dialing via cellphones in collaboration with a private company, collects nationally-representative large-scale survey data, fields a face-to-face survey as a part of Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES), and designs field experiments offline and online. In particular, we plan to rely on three different approaches:

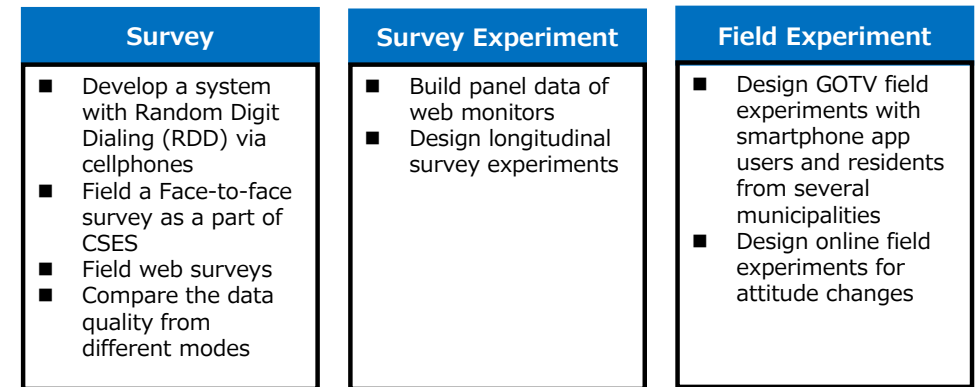| Survey	Survey Experiment	Field Experiment
■ Develop a system with Random Digit Dialing (RDD) via cellphones ■ Field a Face-to-face survey as a part of CSES ■ Field web surveys ■ Compare the data quality from different modes	■ Build panel data of web monitors ■ Design longitudinal survey experiments	■ Design GOTV field experiments with smartphone app users and residents from several municipalities ■ Design online field experiments for attitude changes

Figure 3. Three methodologies

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