

Thesis Abstract

Title of Thesis	Essays on Political Competition and Issue Selection
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Language used: same as your dissertation manuscript
(English: up to 1500 words / Japanese: up to 3000 characters)
If your dissertation is in Japanese, you must also write an English version.

The primary objective of this thesis is to investigate how political parties strategically prioritize and emphasize specific issues during political campaigns, a phenomenon referred to as “issue selection.” Additionally, we aim to comprehend the influence of these strategies on electoral outcomes. The thesis approaches this topic from three distinct perspectives: (i) The influence of media competition on issue selection. (ii) The interaction between parties' issue selection strategy and their policy platforms (such as tax policy) and its impact on income inequality. (iii) The relationship between law enforcement policies on crime and the strategies employed by parties in issue selection (e.g., capturing voters' attention by disseminating misinformation on crime-related issues). The three essays in this thesis can be summarized as follows.

Chapter 2. Issue selection, media competition, and polarization of salience

This chapter is based on the paper entitled “Issue selection, media competition, and polarization of salience” published in *Games and Economic Behavior* 136:197–225.

The primary objective of this chapter is to analyze the interplay between media competition and parties' strategies for selecting issues, and how these factors influence issue salience and electoral outcomes. The role of media is crucial in issue selection because voters perceive political campaigns through media reporting. However, to the best of my knowledge, no study has explored the impact of media competition on parties' issue selection. In this chapter, we develop an issue selection model that incorporates the profit-maximization behavior of media outlets. The results can be summarized in three main components. Firstly, we find that media outlets' issue coverage diverges even when they lack ideological preferences. Secondly, competition among media outlets and the strategic issue selection by parties

contribute to the “polarization of issue salience,” meaning that one group of voters places greater emphasis on a specific issue, while another group of voters prioritizes a different issue. Finally, we demonstrate that this polarization increases the vote share of the party with lower-quality policy proposals.

Chapter 3. Issue selection, inequality, and polarization of social ideologies

This chapter is based on a working paper that shares the same title as this chapter.

The central question of this chapter is as follows: In electoral competitions, political parties attempt to address key political issues, such as tax rates and social issues (e.g., abortion, same-sex marriage, and gun control). What factors prompt parties to choose which issues to emphasize and how does this dynamic intersect with their policy platforms, such as tax policies?

To answer this question, this chapter develops an issue selection model between liberal and conservative parties with fixed social ideological positions and explores how parties' issue selection strategies interact with their tax proposals. The findings reveal that the polarization of social ideologies motivates both parties to target low-income/conservative voters during the campaign stage. This pattern makes conservative parties prioritize social issues, while liberal parties emphasize economic distribution problems. Furthermore, this equilibrium indicates that if voters are more likely to shift their attention toward social issues due to a bias, both parties advocate for tax reductions, contributing to an increase in income inequality.

Chapter 4. Law enforcement and political misinformation

This chapter is based on the paper entitled “Law enforcement and political misinformation”, which is co-authored with Ken Yahagi and forthcoming in *Journal of Theoretical Politics*.

This chapter investigates parties' issue selection strategy from a different perspective compared to other chapters: political misinformation. It specifically addresses the law enforcement policy for crimes and assumes that political parties can disseminate misinformation about the harm caused by crimes. This form of misinformation shares the same structure as the issue selection strategy discussed above. If voters perceive the crime situation to be more severe than reality, it is equivalent to them believing that crime-related issues are more salient.

Building on this observation, the central question of this chapter can be stated as follows: Why has criminal law enforcement become increasingly punitive, despite improvements in the situation over the decades? This chapter provides an answer from the perspective of parties manipulating voters' perceptions about the crime situation (misinformation). To this end, we develop a law enforcement model combined with political competition and examine how political parties' campaigns affect voters' perceptions of crime and the equilibrium law

enforcement policy. During a political campaign, we demonstrate that one political party has an incentive to exaggerate the severity of crime, while the other party has an incentive to correct voters' beliefs. However, even though the two parties attempt to shift voters' beliefs in opposite directions, we show that the cumulative effect of a political campaign is more likely to drive both parties' policies in a harsh direction.

The thesis is structured as follows: Chapter 1 introduces the thesis's objectives and related literature. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 delve into the model summarized earlier. In conclusion, Chapter 5 provides a summary of each preceding chapter and explores potential directions for future research.