

1. Record Nr.	UNINA9910455602803321
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Titolo	Measuring judicial independence [[electronic resource]] : the political economy of judging in Japan / / J. Mark Ramseyer and Eric B. Rasmusen
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Chicago, IL, : University of Chicago Press, 2003
ISBN	1-282-53769-5 9786612537691 0-226-70387-8
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (215 p.)
Collana	Studies in law and economics
Altri autori (Persone)	RasmusenEric
Disciplina	347.52/014
Soggetti	Judges - Japan Judicial process - Japan Political questions and judicial power - Japan Courts - Japan Electronic books.
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Note generali	Description based upon print version of record.
Nota di bibliografia	Includes bibliographical references (p. 187-196) and index.
Nota di contenuto	Frontmatter -- Contents -- Preface -- Acknowledgments -- Introduction: 1968 -- 1. The Setting -- 2. Preliminary Empirics: Methodology and Communist Judges -- 3. The Effect of Judicial Decisions: Anti-Government Opinions and Electoral Law Disputes -- 4. Political Disputes: Military, Malapportionment, Injunctions, and Constitutional Law -- 5. Administrative Disputes: Taxpayers against the Government -- 6. Criminal Cases: Suspects against the Government -- 7. Toward a Party-Alternation Theory of Comparative Judicial Independence -- 8. Conclusions -- Appendix A. Excerpts from the Constitutional Texts -- Appendix B. Data Used for Time2Sok Estimates in Tables 2.5-2.7 -- Appendix C. Interpreting Ordered Probit Results in Tables 3.3 and 3.4 -- Appendix D. A Formal Model of Prosecutorial Incentives -- References -- Index
Sommario/riassunto	The role of the U.S. Supreme Court in the aftermath of the 2000 presidential election raised questions in the minds of many Americans about the relationships between judges and political influence; the following years saw equally heated debates over the appropriate role of

political ideology in selecting federal judges. Legal scholars have always debated these questions-asking, in effect, how much judicial systems operate on merit and principle and how much they are shaped by politics. The Japanese Constitution, like many others, requires that all judges be "independent in the exercise of their conscience and bound only by this Constitution and its laws." Consistent with this requirement, Japanese courts have long enjoyed a reputation for vigilant independence-an idea challenged only occasionally, and most often anecdotally. But in this book, J. Mark Ramseyer and Eric B. Rasmusen use the latest statistical techniques to examine whether that reputation always holds up to scrutiny-whether, and to what extent, the careers of lower court judges can be manipulated to political advantage. On the basis of careful econometric analysis of career data for hundreds of judges, Ramseyer and Rasmusen find that Japanese politics do influence judicial careers, discreetly and indirectly: judges who decide politically charged cases in ways favored by the ruling party enjoy better careers after their decisions than might otherwise be expected, while dissenting judges are more likely to find their careers hampered by assignments to less desirable positions. Ramseyer and Rasmusen's sophisticated yet accessible analysis has much to offer anyone interested in either judicial independence or the application of econometric techniques in the social sciences.
