PART FOUR

POLITICAL ASPECTS OF DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE
INTRODUCTION

Many states have tried to manage their people’s fertility behaviour both to curb and to promote population growth. China’s one-child-policy comes to mind or Russia’s recent bids to boost birth rates. Japan, too, has a history of population policies. However, the real success of state intervention into population behaviour is a matter about which scholars are divided. Although it is a central issue, it is not exclusively fertility behaviour that is the interest of politics when dealing with a nation’s demographic development. Questions that arise in this field of research are numerous; they include, for example, policy making for specific groups, such as the elderly or students, people living in rural, gradually depopulating areas, labour migrants crossing borders to compensate for shrinking national workforces, and many others. Questions that need to be addressed in a political science setting concern not only the contents of these policies, but also the underlying process of political agenda setting and decision making, which may provide general insights into how policy making works.

This part of the Handbook focuses on political aspects of Japan’s demographic change. It takes a two-sided approach of studying, on the one hand, the multiple policy making actors and the interdependence between them, and, on the other hand, the contents of actual policy outcomes. In detail, the chapters of this part fall into three groups. First, the three chapters by Schoppa, Campbell, and Talcott discuss issues of demographics and state institutions, in other words, so-called traditional political actors. The second group, Potter, Pekkanen and Tsujinaka, as well as Ogawa focus on how Japan’s civil society, a relatively new political actor in Japan, is reacting to the nation’s demographic development. The third group, Kreitz-Sandberg, Coleman, Roberts, Feldhoff, and Maclachlan highlight frameworks and challenges within specific policy fields. The following paragraphs offer brief introductions to each of these chapters.

Schoppa acquaints the reader with the Japanese state’s attempts to manage its people’s fertility behaviour. Attempts to reverse the current trend of population decline through political interference in people’s fertility behaviour so far have failed, because of a taboo on pro-natalism which has its roots in the *umeyo fuyaseyo* [give birth and multiply] policy