



【Webinar】
Populism and
New Political Divisions
in Japan after the Election

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1. Main Arguments

(1) The rise of *Sanseito*:

Dismantling of conservative factions in the LDP

→ *Sanseito*.

(2) Conservatives who make ‘xenophobic’ statements have always existed since the Second World War.

- The conservative mainstream of the LDP has restricted it.

→the disappearance of the LDP's conservatives

Statements have come to the fore through Mr. Kamiya and *Sanseito*.

→a “noisy minority” who have not suddenly increased in number this time.

(3) Sanseito, repeatedly having their statements criticised and then corrected, will gradually become an ordinary conservative party.

⇔However, Sanseito will not disappear.

They built a strong local organisation at the time of their founding, and their local base remains stable.

→The revival of the LDP's conservative faction is difficult.

(4) The LDP is no longer the world's strongest catch-all party.

- A battle within the party (to determine the direction of Japanese politics)

“Centrist party” or “Conservative party”.

2. House of Councillors Election

(1) Ruling Coalition: Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and *Komeito*

- Total: 47 seats (-19)
LDP: 39 seats (-13), *Komeito*: 8 seats (-6)
+ 75 seats not up for re-election = total 122 seats
Fell short of the 125-seat majority by 3 seats.

(2) Opposition Parties

- Constitutional Democratic Party (CDP): 22 seats (± 0)
- *Nihon Ishin no Kai* (*Ishin*): 7 seats (+1)
- Japanese Communist Party: 3 seats (-4)
- *Reiwa Shinsengumi*: 3 seats (+1)
- Conservative Party: 2 seats (+2)
- Social Democratic Party: 1 seat (± 0)
- Team Mirai: 1 seat (+1)

(3) Parties that made significant advances:

- Democratic Party for the People (DPP): 17 seats (+11)
- *Sanseito*: 14 seats (+14)

3. *Sanseito*

(1) Nationalist statements gaining support:

- “Japanese First”
 - “Serious crimes by foreigners are increasing”
 - “Elderly women cannot bear children”
 - “(Optional separate surnames for married couples) will worsen public safety in Japan”

(2) “**Kamiya Always Chickens Out (KACO)**”(?)

- In the press conference, journalists asked, “are there privileges for foreigners in Japan?”
 - Kamiya replied,
 - “I don’t think there are any in particular. There may be some cases where Japanese people feel that it’s not fair.”



⇒ This kind of ‘KACO’ behaviour will continue in the future.

4. What is the *Sanseito* Phenomenon?

(1) Before Sanseito, populism has not spread in Japan.

(2) Liberal Democratic Party (LDP):

- The world strongest ‘Catch-all Party’:

- ‘Catch-all Party’:

- 1) Representing no ideology.

Supporting ideologies as diverse and conflicting as classical liberalism, nationalism and aristocracy/elitism.

- 2) pork-barrel politics

Distributing benefits to supporters and constituencies

→seeking to attract people with diverse viewpoints and thus appeal to more of the electorate.

- Why is the LDP the strongest party?
→LDP can realise policies which supporters of opposition parties require.
- Japanese politics: ‘Ideal opposition→Real ruling party’
- LDP in ‘1955 regime’:
‘Environmental policy’, ‘Welfare Policy’



- 1) In the 1970s, opposition parties such as the Socialist Party started to make claims.
- 2) The LDP implemented them with budgets.
- 3) The LDP deprived the opposition of centre-left voters in urban areas.
→The opposition were undermined.
The LDP has maintained its power for over 60 years.

- The right wing is undermined by the LDP :
 - 1) Prime Minister Abe Shinzo :
Originally, he was regarded as a typical right-wing populist.



- a. Before Abe became Prime Minister:
Like on-line populists, he made a series of far-right comments on Facebook on the constitution, security, education and history
- b. After he became Prime Minister:
He covered up his far-right views.
→He prioritised economic policy
“Abenomics” and social democratic policies.

- Prime Minister Abe Shinzo's image was 'right-wing populist' but he implemented 'social democratic' policies:

- 1) Reformed working practices to improve workers' human rights.

- 2) Promoted women's participation in society.



- 3) Revised immigration law to start accepting low-skilled foreign workers.

- 4) 'Free education' policy from kindergarten and nursery school through elementary, junior high, high school, and university.

- 5) Social security policy to cover all generations.

- “*Nihon Kaigi* (Japan Conference)”:
 - Obviously, right-wing activities are restricted by the LDP.
 - 1) A right-wing organisation based on Japan’s traditional religion (*Shinto*) and a strong supporter of the LDP.
 - 2) Many LDP politicians are members of *Nihon Kaigi*.
 - They expect *Nihon Kaigi* to collect votes at elections.
 - They attend *Nihon Kaigi* conferences and say
“I believe in Japanese gods,” “Japan is the divine nation”.
(→ like Kamiya)
 - 3) However, there are very few cases of the LDP implementing *Nihon Kaigi*’s conservative policies.
 - ⇔ The LDP has implemented social democratic policies, which *Nihon Kaigi* dislike.



(2) New politics (after 2024 General Election)

- Opposition and ruling parties are evenly matched:
 - ‘Catch-all party’ LDP collapsed.
- ‘Consensus politics’ by ‘centrist political parties’

LDP, Komeito

+ Constitutional Democratic Party,
Democratic Party for People,
Nihon Ishin no Kai



- Ideal opposition→Realistic ruling party
- Policies to increase income
Selective separate family names
Women's, children's and LGBTQ rights

- **Key figures in consensus politics:**

Prime Minister Ishiba, Yoshihiko Noda (Leader of the CDP),
Seiji Maehara (Co-leader of *Ishin*), etc.

1) They worked on "political reform" in the 1990s as part of
the "non-LDP camp".

2) Disciples of “Morihiro Hosokawa”.

a. "One Cabinet, one task": not obsessed with power

($\Leftrightarrow$ "Shinzo Abe", who was obsessed with long-term government)

b. Other Hosokawa disciples:

Seiko Noda, Toshimitsu Motegi, Yukio Edano

Sanae Takaichi also started her political career in the "non-LDP
camp.“

→ Her relationship with Ichiro Ozawa

- New consensus politics will face difficulties:
 - Implementation of large-scale redistribution policies
 - 1) Expansion of the budget deficit
 - Consideration of tax increases
 - 2) Dissatisfied left- and right-wing poor
 - ‘Consensus politics’ leads to stagnation
 - Decline in Cabinet approval ratings, demand for strong leadership
- ⇒ Rise of populist political parties on both left and right
(*Sanseito* phenomenon)



(3) Collapse of the former Abe faction→*Sanseito*

- The ‘*Uragane* (secret funds)’ issue and other issues

1) Many of the ‘secret funds’ lawmakers, many of whom were from the former Abe faction, lost their seats in the House of Representatives Election in 2024.

2) With the collapse of the conservative faction, the LDP no longer covered everything from conservatives to liberals.

⇒ The core supporters of the conservative faction have given up on the LDP without the former Abe faction. Their votes went to *Sanseito*.

(4) Results of 2025 House of Councillors Election (Proportional Representation)

- Compared to the 2022 House of Councillors Election
 - 1) The LDP lost 6 seats and Ishin Party lost 3 seats,
 - 2) The Democratic Party for People gained 3 seats,
 - 3) *Sanseito* gained 6 seats.

4) Constitutional Democratic Party 7→7

The result seems similar to the UK General Election in 2024.

→Conservative votes moved to Reform UK

Labour is not so popular, but win.

(5) What happened to the core conservative vote?

- Core conservatives have not suddenly appeared, but have been a consistent presence since WWII.
- Originally, these conservatives had ideas like xenophobia, male superiority, and sovereignty of the Emperor. These were partly suppressed by the conservatives in the LDP.

⇔ However, former Prime Minister Abe was assassinated.

- a. Perhaps because his political power disappeared, problems such as the former Unification Church and the ‘secret funds’ issue erupted.
- b. The conservative lawmakers surrounding Abe lost their seats and the Abe faction has disappeared.

c. Core conservatives lost their inhibitions and suddenly surfaced.

→Kamiya deliberately made statements in an attempt to garner all the conservative votes.

→That is the outcome of this election. It can be said that xenophobia in Japan has not suddenly increased.

(6)The future of the LDP's conservatives and *Sanseito*

- Most people are keeping their cool.
 - 1) From now on, the various statements made by *Sanseito* during elections will be scrutinised by liberal journalists and people.
 - 2) Kamiya will repeatedly revise his statements.
 - Sanseito* will become an ordinary conservative party with no distinctive features.
 - 3) *Sanseito* will not disappear.
 - It has 287 branches and 150 local assembly members nationwide.

At the time of the party's founding, Joichiro Shinohara, a former Communist Party staffer, brought the Communist Party's organizational and movement theories into the party.

- It will be difficult for the LDP to regain control of its conservative supporters.
- The LDP is no longer the ‘world's strongest catch-all party’. It appears to have become an ordinary centre-right party.

5. Japanese politics in the future

(1) Will Prime Minister Ishiba resign?

- The LDP lost its majority in both houses for the first time since its founding.

→ However, Prime Minister Ishiba has expressed his intention to continue in office.

- According to an Asahi Shimbun public opinion poll:

1) "Should resign": 41%

2) "Should not resign": 47%

→ The defeat is a problem for the LDP as a whole, not just the Prime Minister.

Public opinion is divided: Centrists vs Conservatives.

(3) "Post-Ishiba" after Ishiba's resignation

- Sanae Takaichi, Takayuki Kobayashi (Conservative faction)
- Yoshimasa Hayashi (Kishida faction, can be supported by both conservatives and centrists)
- Shinjiro Koizumi (Highly popular)

→ A battle to determine the future of the LDP.

"Conservative party" vs "Centrist party"

(4) Coalition with Opposition Parties:

- Whether Prime Minister Ishiba continues in office or it becomes "post-Ishiba," a new coalition with opposition parties will be necessary.
- “The minimum winning coalition”?
 - 1) Democratic Party for People
 - 2) Nihon Ishin no Kai
 - Conservatives prefer

(Polarized and confrontational politics)
- “The Grand Coalition”

with the Constitutional Democratic Party

(Moderate and consensus politics)

(5) Benefits of a Grand Coalition:

- Security Policy
 - Since the War, security policy has been fiercely contested between the ruling and opposition parties. There was no room for discussion.
 - → An unstable situation.
 - For the first time, there is a possibility of decision-making through consensus between the ruling and opposition parties.



- Countermeasures against populism.
The two main parties merge to play consensus politics through moderate debate, and then incorporate the demands of minorities on the left and right.

ex. Germany:

Experienced grand coalition several times

- 1) Angela Merkel's grand coalition government between CDU and SPD
- 2) After the general election in February 2025, a grand coalition between the CDU and SPD
- 3) Countermeasures against Neo-Nazis

Thanks for your attention.