



## ***JAPAN FIRST! THE RECENT RISE OF THE FAR-RIGHT IN JAPAN AND THE FUTURE OF JAPANESE POLITICS***

BY PETER BENNETT

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On July 20, 2025, the Japanese people delivered their strongest rebuke in over a decade to the conservative-leaning Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in the House of Councillors, Japan's upper house. Needing 50 seats to keep their majority in the Upper House, the LDP failed to do so, [winning only 39](#). Their coalition partner, Komeito, failed to make up the difference, [winning only an additional 8 seats](#). But it was not the left-wing parties that won the election. The biggest winner was the far-right, with the far-right party [Sanseito gaining 14 seats](#). This makes Sanseito the [fourth-largest opposition party](#) in the upper house. This rise of Sanseito has been fueled by a mixture of successful online messaging and discontentment of young people in Japan towards major political parties.

### **Sanseito Ideology, Message, and its Followers**

Sanseito and its founder are relatively new to politics. [Sanseito was formed as a grassroots political party in 2020 by Sohei Kamiya, who used YouTube to show how a political party evolves. Two years later, the party won national seats, with Kamiya securing a seat in the Upper House.](#) Sanseito followed this positive result by [winning 3 seats in the lower house in 2024](#), and has now achieved its most successful result in last month's ballot.

When placing blame for Japan's current situation, Kamiya, the party's current leader, often [claims that immigrants and tourists are responsible for rising costs, crime, and flat wages](#). This directly addresses the main concerns of Japanese voters, as [rising costs of daily necessities, such as rice, weighed heavily on voters' minds](#) during the election. Additionally, comparisons have been made between the group's origins and the American conspiracy theory movement [QAnon, as Sanseito used the internet to spread conspiracy theories during the coronavirus pandemic, including anti-vaccination](#) and other forms of misinformation. Sanseito's supporters are discontent with the ruling parties, and they are looking to shake up the Japanese political scene in a similar way that MAGA has transformed American politics. And some are disillusioned with how the ruling parties have attempted to solve the problems in their lives, as evident from [Sanseito's strong support among those from the "Lost Generation"](#).

Sanseito is known for its online messaging. Its YouTube channel has [nearly 500,000 subscribers](#) compared to other major parties in Japan, such as the LDP's channel, which has [only 140,000](#). Sanseito's use of online platforms played a key role in garnering votes during the Upper House election. An exit poll by *Jiji Press* discovered that [half of all Japanese voters relied on social media and video-sharing sites](#) to decide on which party to vote for. This is also reflected in its voter base, which heavily skews on the younger side, being most popular among the [18-39 year old male demographic](#). The LDP, in contrast, is [most popular with the 70+ senior population](#). Low youth engagement rates have been the norm in recent years, with voter turnout among those [under 30 being 37%, compared to a 64% average for those 60+ in the past few elections](#). This past election, [20% of 18-19-year-old voters voted for Sanseito](#). This is particularly notable, as some regions saw nearly [50% turnout among 18-19 year olds](#), bringing them close to the average for voter turnout.

## Make Japan Great Again?

Is the far-right movement stirring in Japan similar to its American counterpart? Influences from the American MAGA movement can be seen in how Kamiya approaches topics such as immigration and DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion). Similar to Trump's description of a migrant invasion, Kamiya has depicted immigration to Japan as an invasion, despite [immigrants making up only 3% of the Japanese population](#). Similarly to Trump, [Sanseito has called for a review of all policies in Japan related to DEI](#).

When it comes to "Making Japan Great Again," it is economic changes that the Japanese voters want. [Kamiya often mentions how the "Japan First" ideology would improve Japanese voters' financial status](#) if put into practice. In the face of stagnant wages and rising costs, these claims [succeeded in bringing more voters to Sanseito's side](#). However, as Sanseito only has three seats in the Lower House and 14 in the Upper House, it will be difficult for the party to carry out its "Japan First" initiatives, especially the more politically extreme ones, [such as its beliefs about vaccines](#). These extreme beliefs stem from [their opposition to introducing anything artificial to the body, which includes vaccines](#).

## The Future of the Far-Right in Japan

The rise of Sanseito is a sign of growing discontent among youth in Japan. While fringe parties, such as the NHK Party, have won national seats, [it was only a few](#). However, the number of seats Sanseito has won has been increasing, and it holds more than 10 seats, a feat no fringe party has ever accomplished in Japan. Youth in Japan have long felt that parties such as the LDP are disconnected from the issues that affect them [such as tuition fees and financial support from the government](#). [All these topics are mentioned, either directly or indirectly, as one of Sanseito's 10 main "pillars" or their nation-building policies](#). Additionally, they believe that their representatives are too old to understand the opinions of youth, with

the [average age of representatives being almost 55 years old](#). Sanseito was able to appeal to the youth with candidates that were closer in age, such as the former singer, [Saya, who is 43 years old](#). Additionally, Sanseito managed to appeal to youth directly on the platforms that they frequent.

While this is a short-term win for Sanseito, their future does not look good as previously [the LDP incorporated the far-right into its big tent party](#), making the success of parties such as Sanseito difficult.<sup>1</sup> However, social media played a big role in the success of Sanseito, allowing the party to easily spread its message and gather supporters. In the next election, the major parties will learn the importance of social media after this election, copying Sanseito's success. Expect this short-term win for Sanseito to be its biggest success, as other right-wing parties, especially the LDP, will absorb the far-right and its supporters. And to win over the youth vote, parties will start fielding younger candidates, who can relate to the issues of the younger generation. *Disclaimer: All opinions in this article are solely those of the author and do not represent any organization.*

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<sup>1</sup> Fackler, "Young Voters Are Pulling Japan to the Right".