

10 October 2025

Political instability grows as Kōmeitō quits coalition

Key takeaways

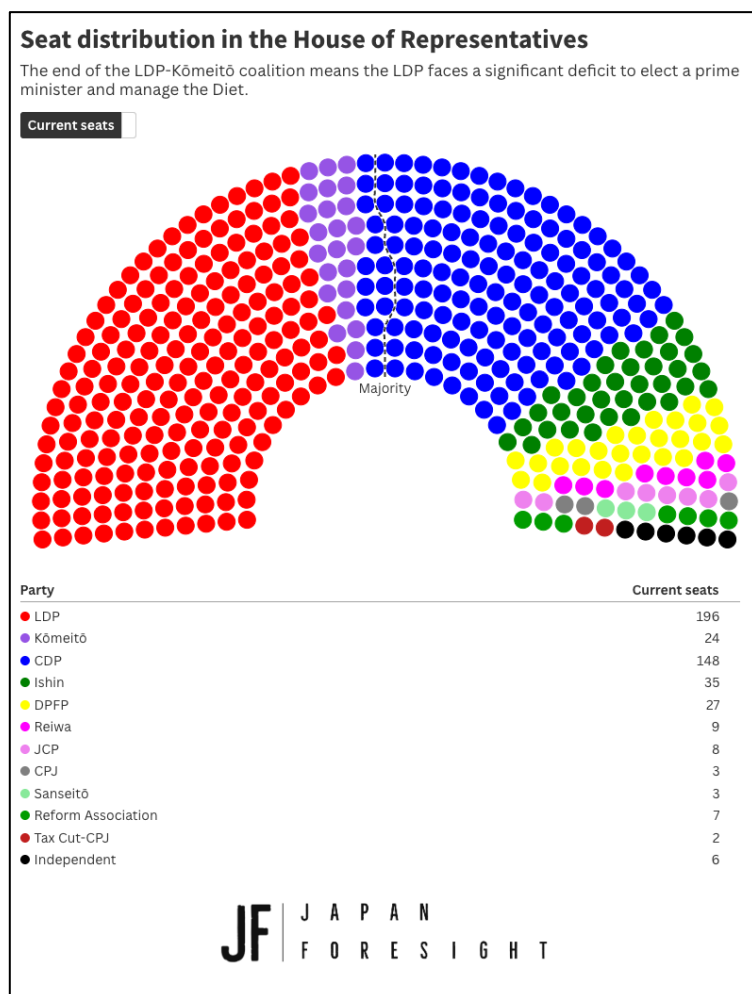
- Kōmeitō leader Saitō Tetsuo, after meeting with Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) leader Takaichi Sanae on 10 October, said that his party would end the coalition with the LDP.
- Kōmeitō's exit opens the possibility that a multi-party coalition could block Takaichi from becoming prime minister, and, even if she wins, her position – and the LDP's – is increasingly tenuous.
- The possibility of a snap election contested in unfavorable circumstances for the LDP continues to grow.

After a ninety-minute meeting between Kōmeitō leader Saitō Tetsuo and Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) leader Takaichi Sanae on Friday, 10 October, Saitō announced that Kōmeitō would leave the ruling coalition, ending a twenty-six-year partnership. The end of the coalition increases uncertainty in three ways.

First, **it complicates the process of Takaichi's succeeding Ishiba Shigeru as prime minister.** The schedule for opening a Diet session and holding a premiership vote already slipped from 15 October to the following week; now, with the outlook for the premiership vote more complicated, the timeline for opening a Diet session could slip further. That said, the LDP may not want to delay too long lest the party gives opposition parties more time to hammer out their differences and agree on an alternative coalition arrangement.

It is still more likely than not that Takaichi becomes the prime minister, though her chances of success have worsened substantially. The biggest question is whether enough opposition lawmakers are willing to vote for Democratic Party for the People

(DPFP) leader Tamaki Yūichirō in a runoff against Takaichi. The Constitutional Democratic Party (CDP) has been talking with other opposition parties calling for a unified effort to elect as the prime minister, indicating its willingness to vote for Tamaki instead of CDP leader Noda Yoshihiko. Until now, the DPFP itself has not endorsed the CDP's efforts, citing significant policy differences. However, **Tamaki, in his response to Kōmeitō's exit from the coalition, expressed his readiness to serve as prime minister** and suggested that, if the CDP is willing to compromise on several major policy issues, there could be a pathway to cooperation. **If Tamaki decides to campaign actively for the premiership, it could increase the possibility of a multi-party coalition ousting the LDP from power.** The CDP, DPFP, and Ishin no Kai together have 210 seats to the LDP's 196; even a CDP-DPFP-Kōmeitō combination could top the LDP with 199 seats, assuming the LDP could not convince some other group of lawmakers to back Takaichi. Of course, it is conceivable that the LDP could trade policy concessions for either their support for Takaichi in a runoff or at the very least their abstentions. To ensure Takaichi's elevation to the premiership, the LDP needs to prevent an alternative candidate from securing 197 votes in the second round.



Second, as suggested previously, even if Takaichi is selected as prime minister, **the end of the LDP-Kōmeitō coalition will significantly complicate the government's management of the legislative process.** No single opposition party has enough votes to help secure a majority of 233 seats in the House of Representatives – the situation is slightly better in the upper house, where the LDP and DPFP together have 125 seats, just over a majority – but the lower house's budgetary supremacy means that ensuring enough votes in the lower house is more important. In the meantime, the negotiations around a supplemental budget, which were complicated enough when the LDP could count on Kōmeitō's support, will be even more challenging as the parties try to hammer out a compromise that satisfies enough parties to reach a 233-seat majority.

Meanwhile, the proximate cause for the breakdown of the LDP-Kōmeitō coalition –

Kōmeitō's objections to Takaichi's views on "money in politics" and seeming unwillingness to take steps to regain public trust after the LDP's corruption scandals – means that the opposition could force this issue on to the agenda in the extraordinary session. Ultimately, the compromises involved in the LDP's managing a minority government on its own or in forging a non-LDP multi-party coalition under Tamaki's leadership suggest that it is difficult to anticipate precisely what will be in a stimulus package, let alone a FY2026 budget.

Third, the end of the ruling coalition means that the likelihood of a snap election is rising – but at this point a snap election would be contested on unfavorable terrain for the LDP. To be sure, the LDP may be deeply reluctant to call a snap election, since it would have to contend without Kōmeitō's support, which for decades has been crucial for helping dozens of LDP candidates win elections. It would also continue to face pressure from Sanseitō and the DPFP on the right, both of which have stressed not only that they are conservative but that they are conservative without the LDP's history of corruption. There are multiple pathways to a snap election, whether a no-confidence motion or the threat of a no-confidence motion resulting in a negotiated dissolution; a Tamaki-led coalition agreeing that it will work together to pass a supplemental budget and political reform and then call a snap election; or, perhaps less likely, the government (under Ishiba) dissolving the Diet before it even votes on a new prime minister. The biggest beneficiary of an early election could be Noda and the CDP, which despite its struggles and disappointing performance in the upper house elections, is still prepared to field more candidates than the DPFP, could benefit from Noda's image as a moderate conservative, and, if it could cooperate even on a limited basis with Kōmeitō would get a boost in close races.

The upshot is that the next ten days could see frenetic activity as the LDP and the opposition parties scramble to secure the votes needed to elect a prime minister. But regardless of the outcome of the Diet's vote on a prime minister, the instability that has characterized Japanese politics for the past three years is all but certain to continue, complicating the government's ability to make decisive commitments on divisive political issues, including defense spending, social security reform, and tax reform.

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