

Institute of Chinese Studies

# WEDNESDAY SEMINAR

*LDP's Leadership Test in  
Japan's Lower House  
Elections: Assessing the  
Political Pulse*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Speaker :

**Titli Basu**

*30 October 2024*

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**Speaker: Dr. Titli Basu**, Associate Professor, Centre for East Asian Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

**Chair: Amb. Deepa Wadhwa**, former Diplomat; Chairperson, India-Japan Friendship Forum; Member, Governing Council, Asian Confluence, Shillong.

**Date:** 30 October 2024

**Venue:** Zoom

- The seminar examined the possibility of political upheaval in Japan along with political instability, following the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)-led coalition's loss of its majority in the Lower House elections. This shift has altered Japan's leadership dynamics and, according to the speaker, will have significant repercussions for the country's pursuit of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific.
- Dr. Titli Basu described the political pulse in Japan as highly volatile, highlighting three critical elections that define the country's democratic structure. First, the LDP Presidential Election (27 September 2024), which marked the leadership transition from Kishida Fumio to Ishiba Shigeru. Second, the Lower House Election (27 October 2024), which resulted in the LDP-led coalition losing its majority, creating political instability as no single party emerged with a clear majority. Third, the upcoming Upper House Election (2025), which is anticipated to be a high-stakes test for the LDP-led coalition.
- The speaker argued that an unclear majority in the Lower House has given rise to political instability in Japan, as the ruling coalition will need to bargain with the opposition with regard to bringing in legislation. There have been increased trade-offs between political parties to create a stable political environment.

- Dr. Basu highlighted the deep division within the LDP-, especially after the Unification Church scandal, which has severely eroded public trust in the LDP. The LDP's diminished majority has also created opportunities for opposition parties to expand their influence, thus reshaping Japan's political landscape. Furthermore Ishiba Shigeru, who assumed the role of Prime Minister in September 2024, has faced criticism for a perceived leadership deficit and lack of a clear vision. This has also affected Japan's ability to assert a decisive leadership role in the Indo-Pacific.
- The speaker argued that the leadership transition and the LDP's weakened position in the Lower House reflect a deficit of statesmanship, raising concerns about Japan's ability to maintain a stable domestic political environment. Moreover, political instability has implications for Japan's strategic leadership in the Indo-Pacific amid challenges posed by China.
- Dr. Basu concluded by stating that leadership challenges and political instability will hinder Japan's capacity to effectively address geopolitical and geoeconomic issues. Decisive leadership is critical not only for Japan's domestic politics but also for its role in its neighbourhood. The current political climate, marked by a leadership deficit and internal divisions, poses significant obstacles to Japan's ability to maintain its strategic influence in the region and navigate the challenges posed by China.

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