

**ABE AND THE ART OF MANAGING
INTRAPARTY FACTIONALISM**

LIM Tai Wei

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Executive Summary

1. After winning resounding party elections and general election, Japan's Prime Minister (PM) Abe and his political party the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) now enjoys a powerful political mandate (longest tenure as prime minister in a decade).
2. The opposition parties are in disarray and shunned by a large section of the public due to the lacklustre performance of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) when they were in power from 2010 to 2013.
3. Therefore, their impact on national policies are limited and circumscribed. Contestation of power now really rests upon intra-party factional battles and alliances made up of moderates, reformists and hard-core conservatives.
4. Senior LDP politician Tanigaki, who heads a faction of around 29 members within the LDP, is dovish in international relations and keen on fiscal prudence. In the mass media, Tanigaki is also the moderate poster child for the otherwise conservative LDP image in the minds of the public.
5. Toshihiro Nikai heads an intraparty faction of approximately 28 members; he and Tanigaki are senior party leaders and are supported by the PM for repairing ties with China and revitalising the foundational US-Japan alliance.
6. Besides Tanigaki, there are other factions within the LDP with moderate positions focused on other issues such as economic and agricultural reforms.
7. Koya Nishikawa belonged to the Nikai faction of the *norinzoku* tribe which had close access to PM Abe. Abe worked with him on opening up the agricultural sector for Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) until Nishikawa was brought down by a donation scandal.
8. Nishikawa was a reform-minded leader within the *norinzoku* or 'agricultural tribe', a lobby for the Japanese agricultural sector. He is a rarity because the *norinzoku* is

generally less reformist in outlook and protectionist, therefore a potential obstruction to the TPP which has stalled Japan's opening-up of agricultural sectors.

9. At the same time, PM Abe is curtailing the more hardcore hawkish conservatives within his own party. Though hawkish Shigeru Ishiba is a stronger advocate for exercising Japan's right to collective self-defence than PM Abe, he was defeated in the party's leadership race due to a strong factional bloc support for Abe.
10. Currently, the largest intraparty faction in LDP is the Seiwai Seisaku Kenkyukai. Abe used to be its leading member but has to leave it after becoming PM to stay faction-neutral. He continues to enjoy the support of this faction.