

**JAPAN'S 2017 LOWER HOUSE ELECTION:
LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY'S
LANDSLIDE VICTORY**

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Executive Summary

1. Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party's (LDP) landslide victory in October 2017 consolidated its one-party dominance at the national level. Together with Komeito, its coalition partner, it secured a two-thirds majority in the Lower House necessary for constitutional amendment.
2. The dominance of Prime Minister Abe Shinzo and the Prime Minister Office (*Kantei*) in policymaking implies a continuity of Japanese domestic politics and foreign policy: a reinforced US-Japan alliance in the wake of a nuclearising North Korea and an impending constitutional revision to give Japan a more traditional, nationalistic and communitarian identity.
3. Abe's electoral victory means the prevalence of Abenomics and a consumption tax hike from eight to 10%.
4. Despite Abe's personal scandals, he benefited electorally from the North Korean missile threat, a relatively strong economy and a fragmented opposition.
5. Governor Koike Yuriko, who was politically more popular than Abe, formed the Kibo no To (Party of Hope) just before the October 2017 Lower House Election. Many pundits anticipated that Koike's new party would be the dark horse in that election.
6. However, Koike's popularity turned out to be a myth. In actuality, the newly formed Party of Hope is bereft of organisation, resources, money and talent.
7. Koike's rejection of all former Democratic Party MPs to run under her banner split the opposition, which worked in LDP's favour.
8. It also led to the formation of Constitutional Democratic Party (CDP) helmed by Edano Yukio (former chief cabinet secretary, minister of economy, trade and

industry in the former DPJ government) to tap the liberal and anti-Abe votes in the electorate. The CDP overtook Koike's party as the number one opposition party.

9. Edano may well turn out to be Abe's political nemesis when he unites other opposition parties and mobilises the Japanese public to reject constitutional revision in a national referendum.
10. Although Abe has won a great electoral victory, his Achilles' heels are the Morimoto Gakuen and Kake scandals. Abe is unlikely to be able to hold off opposition parties which are seeking to grill him on his personal scandals in parliament. His mass popularity will likely dip if more unsavoury details are revealed during parliamentary scrutiny.