

- 7) Democratic Socialist Association 2
(splintered for 4) above)
- 8) Independent 5

The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)

The LDP, since its establishment in 1955 through the union of two separate conservative parties, has enjoyed a monopoly on national government and the allegiance of a majority or more recently, a plurality of the voters. Its support among rural voters has been particularly strong, while its ties with the leaders of commerce and industry are extensive. It is most notable for its strict discipline within the legislature and its functional division into three or four major "factions" of 50-80 members each, led by the LDP "barons", and a few smaller factions of 10-25 members each. The major factions are currently led by the Prime Minister, Masayoshi Ohira, and former Prime Ministers Miki and Fukuda.

Liberal Democratic Strength in the Lower House has been declining gradually for some years and by the mid-1970s it had reached its nadir. In the election for the Lower House in 1976, the LDP won 249 seats and managed to constitute a bare numerical majority with the assistance of 12 conservative "independents".