

Between East and West:

The Neo-Nationalism of an Enduringly Nationalist Japan

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Abstract

Japan has a longstanding history of nationalism, influenced by their geo-political position between the global East and West. This paper explores the dual dynamics that have impacted the development of Japanese nationalism, as well as the rise in Japanese neo-nationalism that can be seen today. To contextualize this discussion, this paper first examines the phenomenon of nationalism and its linkage to right-wing political ideology from a Western lens. Following this, an overview of the Eastern origins of Japanese nationalism is provided. In reflection of the common rhetoric deployed by Japanese neo-nationalists, this paper argues that ignoring the significance of Japan's relation to neighbouring Eastern states throughout history is a grave error. By contextualizing Japanese nationalism with respect to the overlapping impact of Eastern and Western forces, this paper offers a more robust examination of how nationalism in Japan has been constructed over time.

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With the changing tides of global relations, technological innovations, and intercultural communications, nationalism has evolved into a new, fragmented form: neo-nationalism.¹ Neo-nationalism is a global phenomenon, plaguing democracies with the threat of returning to a world that normalizes discriminatory regimes.² As will be later discussed, neo-nationalists select aspects of classical nationalism to uphold while ignoring others, creating a stream of identity politics that is highly discriminatory and most often associated with the right-wing of the political spectrum.³ Thus, the rise in neo-nationalist sentiments proves extremely troubling for coexisting national identities.⁴ Classical theories of nationalism, such as Ernest Gellner's definition that is utilized in this work, are written from a Western-centric worldview.⁵ Though this is not an automatic flaw, one must take care to understand the unique contexts within which non-Western states also developed nationalism.⁶ To theorize nationalism as a Western-born, Western-caused concept in totality would obscure the ways in which non-Western nations have conceptualized their own state national identities, thereby obscuring fuller understandings of nationalism around the world.⁷

The case of Japan proves interesting for this topic, as the nation-state's continued position between the Global East and West differs when compared to the positions of power that Europe and the United States enjoy.⁸ This paper will first discuss its key concepts of nationalism, neo-nationalism, and right-wing populism

¹1. Kawamura and Iwabuchi, "Making neo-nationalist subject in Japan," 16.

²2. Kawamura and Iwabuchi, 16.

³3. Kawamura and Iwabuchi, 16-19.

⁴4. Kawamura and Iwabuchi, 24.

⁵5. Ichijo, "Kokugaku and the emergence of nationalism in Japan," 267; Kawai, "Neoliberalism, Nationalism, and Intercultural Communication," 18; O'Leary, "On the Nature of Nationalism," 206.

⁶6. Ichijo, 267; Kawai, 18.

⁷7. Ichijo, 265.

⁸8. Ichijo, 270; Kawai, 18.

as it arose in the West. From there, the history of Japanese nationalism will be analyzed using these concepts in reference, moving through mid-war and post-war examples of nationalist study and policy. An examination of the rise of right-wing politics in contemporary Japan will conclude this historical analysis, providing a twenty-first century update on the state of neo-nationalism in the country. In doing so, this paper will look at how nationalism has been intrinsic to the Japanese identity before and throughout Western interference, and that the current surge in right-wing neo-nationalist sentiments in Japan can be understood in terms of the country's historical relations with the East and West, together.

Nationalism, Neo-Nationalism, and Populism in the West

An understanding of classical nationalism is needed to later contextualize the concept of neo-nationalism. As Ernest Gellner explained, nationalism holds at its core the belief that a state's political unit and national majority should operate as one.⁹ The national majority of said state is defined by collective customs, language, and worldview, with the principal expectation being that the state's polity will be reflective of these elements.¹⁰ Nationalism at its very core is not inherently a harmful ideology according to Gellner, who noted how the principle of nationalism could be used to argue for preserving cultural diversity by making a clear distinction between members and non-members.¹¹ However, Gellner acknowledged the central principle of a singular unified polity and nation has been used to exclude "foreigners" in the name of cultural homogeneity.¹²

⁹9. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 1.

¹⁰10. Gellner, 40-42.

¹¹11. Gellner, 1-2.

¹²12. Gellner, 1.

Nationalism as an ideology came into play, according to Gellner, as states across the globe made the shift from feudal to industrial societies.¹³ Beginning in eighteenth century Europe, this period of nationalism's development was associated with the rapid creation of new cultural, geographical, and economic boundaries, best understood using the label of globalization.¹⁴ The relatively stable borders that states had once used to define themselves were replaced as overseas migration and international trade rapidly increased.¹⁵ This revolution urged states and their populations to reinforce a sense of unity within themselves, looking to define a central identity.¹⁶ Though Gellner discussed nationalism's development from a Western-centric perspective, he did not completely ignore the colonization of many non-Western states by European powers. European conquest, Gellner noted, "was the fruit of economic and technological superiority" enacted through industry and trade between the European states and the non-Western nations.¹⁷ Gellner has earned a fair amount of criticism for diminishing the extents to which militarization played a part in European colonization and by proximity, contributed to nationalism.¹⁸ However, Gellner's basic definition of nationalism and its relation to globalization are sufficient for the purposes of this paper.

Globalization and its values stemmed from liberalism, an ideology built upon economic values of deregulation and market competition, alongside cultural sentiments of individualism and freedom from state support or intervention.¹⁹ The worldview that liberalism informed was one that oriented failure at the individual level, mystifying the systemic economic woes that arose from mass deregulation as

¹³13. Gellner, 40.

¹⁴14. Gellner, 42.

¹⁵15. Gellner, 42.

¹⁶16. Gellner, 40.

¹⁷17. Gellner, 43.

¹⁸18. Conversi, "Should we still read Ernest Gellner?", 380-387.

¹⁹19. Joppke, "Populism and Cultural Majority Rights," 249-250; Kawai, 17-19.

the fault of the citizen and the citizen alone.²⁰ In this way, liberalism informed very polarizing outlooks on financial inferiority.²¹ While liberalism's key goal was to marketize the economy, its successor differs. Neoliberalism is unique in its extremism, looking to marketize all sectors of life, including the individual.²² Thus, the polarization that liberalism validated has been diffused into other non-economic aspects of living through neoliberalism, fostering notions of failure in state citizens.²³ As globalization has evolved and broadened since the time of Gellner's writing, neoliberalism and its influence upon expressions of extremist ideologies has become paramount.

Built upon the groundworks of classical nationalism and neoliberalism is neo-nationalism. Neo-nationalism is uniquely fragmented, subjective, and volatile, selecting values of classical nationalism and taking them to the extreme.²⁴ In particular, neo-nationalists will revisit the classical nationalist principle of protecting the collective and excluding the outsiders as a justification for historical and ongoing forms of discrimination.²⁵ It is because of this discriminatory selectivity that neo-nationalism has earned its association with right-wing exclusionary politics, including but not limited to neo-conservatism, cyber-nationalism, and most notably, right-wing populism.²⁶

Christian Joppke's text, "Populism and Cultural Majority Rights: An Uneasy Relationship," provides an analysis of Western populism which is useful

²⁰20. Joppke, 249-250; Kawai, 17-19.

²¹21. Kawai, 19.

²²22. Joppke, 249-250; Kawai, 19.

²³23. Kawai, 19.

²⁴24. Kawamura and Iwabuchi, 16.

²⁵25. Kawamura and Iwabuchi, 16-19.

²⁶26. Joppke, 253-255; Kawai, 20; Kawamura and Iwabuchi, 20.

for understanding the discriminatory ideology of neo-nationalism. Populists believe their national populations to be divided into the “pure people” and the elite class, better understood as the corrupt politicians, business owners, and lawmakers who only have their own corrupt agendas in mind.²⁷ The dream for populists is for their state’s politics to represent the pure people’s values.²⁸ This is reminiscent of the core principle of classical nationalism, showing the linkage between the two ideologies. Joppke further broke down populism into left-wing and right-wing streams.²⁹ Left-wing populism differentiates solely between the pure people and the elite class, whereas right-wing populism adds a third dimension: the immigrant minority.³⁰ The troubles that the majority population of neoliberal states face as a result of the rescinding of state welfare and protections are blamed on both the elite politicians, for their failure to act in the people’s favour, and on the immigrant minority for seemingly taking away the little available supports that the pure people have.³¹ The frustrations of right-wing populists can land upon the elite, the immigrants, or both, reflecting the volatility of neo-nationalist sentiments.

Joppke highlighted both the economic strains and cultural uncertainties consistent with neoliberal Western nations as being the dual motivations behind the uptake of right-wing extremism in the pure peoples of Europe and the United States.³² In Joppke’s example, working-class White American citizens may compare their economic hardships to minority citizens, creating a feeling of relative inferiority because they perceive their taxes as being used to fund welfare

²⁷27. Joppke, 248.

²⁸28. Joppke, 248.

²⁹29. Joppke, 248-255.

³⁰30. Joppke, 248-255.

³¹31. Joppke, 255-258.

³²32. Joppke, 255-260.

for minority citizens, who are predominantly members of cultural minorities due to systemic discrimination.³³ The same White American citizens may then see tax-funded affirmative action initiatives that exclude members of the majority culture, themselves, as the state favouring cultural minority groups.³⁴ Thus, the anti-minority, anti-immigrant sentiment that right-wing Western populists carry revolve around frustrations toward perceived self-inadequacy that are then used to justify discrimination.

Gellner's definition of the origins of nationalism and Joppke's overview of Western populism both provide important context for the development of neo-nationalism and right-wing extremism in the modern day. While both Gellner and Joppke's analyses are centred on the West, right-winged political parties and anti-immigrant public rhetoric have risen in non-Western nations as well, such as Japan. In the following section, this paper will review a history of the development of Japanese nationalism in the mid and post-war age through the works of Atsuko Ichijo, Yuko Kawai, and Marie Thorsten, respectively.

Mid-War and Post-War Japanese Nationalism

In her paper "Kokugaku and an alternative account of the emergence of nationalism in Japan," Atsuko Ichijo discussed the concept of *Kokugaku* as one of the first identifiable sources of nationalism in Japanese academia, dating back to the eighteenth century.³⁵ *Kokugaku*, whose kanji characters directly translate to the "study of the nation-state," was an ideology that idealized aggressively

³³33. Joppke, 258.

³⁴34. Joppke, 258.

³⁵35. Ichijo, 270-272.

imperialistic and militaristic values.³⁶ In fact, the slogan “revere the emperor, expel the barbarian” the arose amidst wartime Japan as a form of rallying the nation has been traced back to the *Kokugaku* movement.³⁷ The *Kokugaku*-bend of nationalism viewed feudal Japan as a perfect, harmonious nation, with foreign contract seen as the contamination preventing Japan from achieving total order.³⁸ An example of this emphasis on purification is the Kokugaku school’s focus on solidifying the one true Japanese identity through studying texts that were published in the feudal period.³⁹ Said texts were written using Chinese kanji characters due to there being no existing Japanese writing system at the time, with Kokugaku scholars viewing this as an impurity upon what would become the Japanese kanji system, a key foundation in the formation of their national identity.⁴⁰

As Ichijo further discussed in a reflection of well-known *Kokugaku* ideologists, this supposed in-depth recovery of the feudal Japanese cultural values that were hidden within the Chinese kanji characters led the scholars to place blame upon China for various issues, like peasant revolts and high taxation, that plagued Japanese society.⁴¹ This antagonism towards China for being a perceived impurity upon Japan reflects the growing nationalist sentiments in the state as the transition from feudal to industrial society took place.⁴² It was at this time that Japan eventually made contact with the West through trade with the Dutch East Indian Company, though the majority of non-Japanese contact was and continues to be

³⁶36. Ichijo, 270-271.

³⁷37. Ichijo, 271.

³⁸38. Ichijo, 272.

³⁹39. Ichijo, 271-272.

⁴⁰40. Ichijo, 273.

⁴¹41. Ichijo, 275.

⁴²42. Ichijo, 275.

with neighbouring Eastern nations.⁴³ The West had a minor role in the development of classical nationalism at this time in Japan's history, yet nationalism still grew. In the eyes of Kokugaku nationalists, a superior Japan was one that had purified itself of its foreign defects.

Moving into the twentieth century, the imperial Japanese government engaged in full-force assimilation and exclusion of non-Japanese peoples, both internal and external to the nation's borders.⁴⁴ The disassociation of the Japanese identity from outer neighbours such as China and Korea occurred alongside the assimilation of ethnic minorities within Japan, namely the Indigenous Ainu peoples from the island now known as Hokkaido, the forcibly annexed Okinawan peoples, and the population of ethnic Korean permanent residents, better known as *Zainichi* Koreans.⁴⁵ Japan's focus on dominating the rest of Asia characterized much of the nation's wartime identity.⁴⁶ Post-war, however, Japan's focus shifted to the West.

As Yuko Kawai noted in her analysis of popular discourse regarding Japanese nationalism, "Japan's superiority over Asia is supported by having the West as its point of reference and arguing that Japan has progressed (i.e., westernized) more than Asia."⁴⁷ The classical Japanese nationalism that Ichijo identified under the name of *Kokugaku* had evolved into *nihonjinron*, translating to "the theory of the Japanese peoples."⁴⁸ *Nihonjinron* can thus be understood as the post-war identity conception of what it meant to be Japanese.⁴⁹ While Kokugaku

⁴³43. Ichijo, 273.

⁴⁴44. Kawai, 20-21.

⁴⁵45. Kawai, 20-21; Kawamura and Iwabuchi, 18.

⁴⁶46. Kawai, 21.

⁴⁷47. Kawai, 21.

⁴⁸48. Kawai, 21-22.

⁴⁹49. Kawai, 22.

scholars held feudal Japan as the ideal form of the nation, *nihonjinron* deemed a Japan that resembled Western individualism as the new ideal.⁵⁰ The objectively foreign nature of the West was seen as a critical source of learning for the betterment of Japan, with the study of *nihonjinron* utilizing comparisons between the literature, customs, and societies of Japan and the West to inform the state's nationalism.⁵¹ The outspoken, aggressively antagonistic nationalism of post-war Japan had entered the backstage for the time being.

Marie Thorsten examined how 1960s Japan, wounded by war-time loss, distanced itself from overt nationalism.⁵² In a period of grand economic instability and shame from the nation's historic defeat, the broader Japanese population viewed war-time nationalism with disdain.⁵³ To prevent the collective populus from fragmenting any further, the Japanese government began to repackage nationalism through state-centred economism.⁵⁴ Citizens were encouraged to devote themselves to work, thereby supporting themselves, the economy, and the nation as a whole.⁵⁵ This was not a simple feat, and was accomplished gradually through to the 1990s.⁵⁶

For the average Japanese family, engaging in economism was a means for survival.⁵⁷ The housing market was completely unaffordable, parents were separated from their children due to overtime, and reported deaths from over-work skyrocketed.⁵⁸ Despite this reality, the Japanese government characterized the

⁵⁰50. Kawai, 22.

⁵¹51. Kawai, 22.

⁵²52. Thorsten, "Shame to Vengeance," 221.

⁵³53. Thorsten, 221-222.

⁵⁴54. Thorsten, 224.

⁵⁵55. Thorsten, 224.

⁵⁶56. Thorsten, 231.

⁵⁷57. Thorsten, 225.

⁵⁸58. Thorsten, 225.

population's desperation for stability as a state-wide act of vengeance over losing the war, resulting in the Western misperception of "Japanese people as bound in loyalty and duty around state economic principles, anachronistically shouting 'banzai!' to the high ideals of Japan, Inc."⁵⁹ The West's projected identity of the Japanese was at odds with the lived experiences that made up much of the Japanese identity during this era of post-war fragility, representing a fundamental mischaracterization of post-war Japanese nationalism in the eyes of the West.⁶⁰ As a result of this, *nihonjinron* came back into public debate, with Japanese academics reanalyzing what Japan's core identity truly is.⁶¹

Modern-Day Japanese Nationalism

In the face of the new millennium, Japan's transition into neo-nationalism reflected the continuation of the cultural purity principal to *Kokugaku*. Kristin Surak's application of Will Kymlicka's multiculturalism framework to contemporary Japanese policy concluded that minority rights within the country are loose if not nonexistent, exemplifying an instantiation of Japan's classical nationalism.⁶² Okinawa remains under joint Japanese-American military rule, Zainichi Koreans who were previously stripped of their Japanese citizenship were only granted extended special residency coming into the 1980s, and the Ainu peoples were not formally recognized as an Indigenous minority until 2008.⁶³ This formal designation, however, has not led to any major reparations by the Japanese government towards the Ainu population, which is rapidly dwindling.⁶⁴

⁵⁹Thorsten, 236.

⁶⁰Thorsten, 236.

⁶¹Thorsten, 233.

⁶²Surak, "Assessing Kymlicka's Liberal Multiculturalism in Japan," 236.

⁶³Surak, 231-233.

⁶⁴Surak, 231.

Surak highlighted the Immigration Control Act as one of the few examples of multicultural policies that exist within Japanese law.⁶⁵ Instituted in 1990, the Immigration Control Act granted temporary residence permits with no work restrictions to first, second, and third generation descendants of Japanese emigrants.⁶⁶ Surak noted that though the policy was proposed under the guise of allowing Japanese descendants the ability to learn about Japan's culture first-hand, the lack of work restrictions on their visas led to Japanese businesses to look upon the Immigration Control Act as an opportunity to utilize foreign workers.⁶⁷ Particularly, work that involved extensive physical labour that mainland Japanese workers found unappealing was seen as the slots Japanese descendants could fill.⁶⁸

As the number of Japanese descendant workers rose moving into the 2000s, the Japanese government briefly promoted "multicultural coexistence" as a way of integrating the descendants with the national majority population, as well as the state's internal minority groups.⁶⁹ This promotion involved an unfunded plan to encourage local communities to develop programs to facilitate multicultural coexistence.⁷⁰ Surak argued that this plan's unfunded nature and the lack of initiative from the Japanese government in the decades since has resulted in the continuation of harmful nationalist understandings of the Japanese identity.⁷¹ Local multicultural programs that were implemented following the state government's promotion largely targeted tolerance promotion and multilingualism, not the idea

⁶⁵65. Surak, 233.

⁶⁶66. Surak, 233.

⁶⁷67. Surak, 233.

⁶⁸68. Surak, 233.

⁶⁹69. Surak, 233.

⁷⁰70. Surak, 234.

⁷¹71. Surak, 234.

that the Japanese identity label could extend to individuals that were not fully Japanese.⁷² Thus, the issue of the Japanese identity as one of ethnic purity that stems from Kokugaku and feudal-period thinking continues on even after Japan engaged in limited multicultural efforts. The Immigration Control Act and the subsequent national focus on tolerance over inclusion for non-Japanese communities within policy reinforced the nationalist sentiments of antagonism towards those that Japan has always seen as foreign.

Kawai's research presented a second example of multicultural policy in Japan in the form of the Japanese government's advisory report, "The Frontier Within: Individual Empowerment and Better Governance in the New Millennium," published in 2000.⁷³ The report considered multiple aspects of the West to be used as tools to assist Japanese people in the era of globalization.⁷⁴ For this paper, two leading considerations will be discussed. The first of these aspects is the report's suggestion that Japanese people not only learn English for global literacy, but for Japan to take on English as an official second language.⁷⁵ The report defends this proposition by positioning English as a tool for Japanese residents to "strengthen Japan's national power, not to enhance mutual understanding among people around the world," suggesting that aligning Japan more with the West in spoken tongue would be a crucial advancement for Japan in a global context.⁷⁶

⁷²72. Surak, 234.

⁷³73. Kawai, 23.

⁷⁴74. Kawai, 25.

⁷⁵75. Kawai, 25-26.

⁷⁶76. Kawai, 27.

The advisory also described immigration as an instrument to support the development of Japan in the age of rapid globalization.⁷⁷ Non-Japanese individuals are only accepted in this governmental report by what Kawai labelled as “corporate multiculturalism.”⁷⁸ In other words, foreigners who are welcomed into the state are only those who can contribute to the economy, with no cultural protections.⁷⁹ Western multicultural countries offer minority individuals who immigrate access to cultural protections in exchange for their labour, as well as opportunities to gain citizenship and become part of the respective country’s identity.⁸⁰ “The Frontier Within” does not advise Japan to offer any form of reciprocity to foreign workers, once again reflecting the Japan-first sentiment that has remained as the throughline of Japan’s nationalism and now, neo-nationalism.⁸¹

Right-Wing Populism in Present-Day Japan

Satofumi Kawamura and Koichi Iwabuchi examined the phenomenon of the *netto uyoku*, or the cyber right-wing, in their analysis of the rise of digital neo-nationalism and populism in Japan.⁸² The *netto uyoku* are identified as users who comment particularly violent and inflammatory anti-Korea and anti-China sentiments on online forums.⁸³ The cyber right-wingers are also characterized as being skeptical of left-wing politicians and in support of politicians who honor the Yasukuni war Shrine, who fall on the right to far-right spectrum of Japanese politics.⁸⁴ The majority of the neo-nationalism enacted by the *netto uyoku* takes

⁷⁷77. Kawai, 30.

⁷⁸78. Kawai, 30.

⁷⁹79. Kawai, 30.

⁸⁰80. Surak, 228.

⁸¹81. Kawai, 30.

⁸²82. Kwamura and Iwabuchi, 17-19.

⁸³83. Kawamura and Iwabuchi, 19.

⁸⁴84. Kawamura and Iwabuchi, 19-21.

place online, though there have been instances of the users taking to in-person activism to demonstrate their neo-nationalist beliefs.⁸⁵ One such group is the “Citizen’s League against Special Privilege of Koreans in Japan,” who have organized hate crimes targeting the *Zainichi* Korean community, Okinawans, the Ainu, as well as atomic-bomb survivors and anti-nuclear advocacy groups.⁸⁶ The *netto uyoku*’s selective engagement in classical Japanese nationalist sentiments, particularly of the anti-foreigner ideology, while ignoring the traditional nationalist importance on state unity reflects their alignment with neo-nationalism. Kawamura and Iwabuchi identified the *netto uyoku* as a specific instance of right-wing populism, shown in their blatant divisional worldview of themselves as the pure people, left-wing politicians as the corrupt elite, and non-Japanese foreigners as cause for the dilution of the pure Japanese identity.⁸⁷ The rise of *netto uyoku* online and offline activities reflects that the period of anti-nationalism of the post-war era has melted away, making room for neo-nationalist extremism to boldly present itself modern-day Japan.

In fact, leading Japanese politicians seem to be shifting further and further to the right-wing of the political spectrum. As journalist Yuki Nikaido highlighted in their report, the leading candidates for the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), including the now-prime minister Sanae Takaichi, advocated for stricter tourism policies, reduced immigration policies for foreign Japanese nationals, and restrictions on residential land ownership by foreigners.⁸⁸ Importantly, none of the candidates broadly discussed policies related to themes of socio-cultural integration and coexistence with

⁸⁵85. Kawamura and Iwabuchi, 19.

⁸⁶86. Kawamura and Iwabuchi, 19-20.

⁸⁷87. Kawamura and Iwabuchi, 19-23.

⁸⁸88. Nikaido, “LDP hopefuls push foreigner limits,” sec. 1-14.

non-Japanese residents.⁸⁹ Once again, this reflects an ignorance towards true multicultural coexistence, with the focus of the LDP being on restricting this possibility even further. According to Nikaido's piece, the LDP defended their shift to more neoliberal values as being due to how government-supported tourism led to distrust among Japanese voters, with their evidence being their inability to earn majority government in the election this past July.⁹⁰ Thus, the LDP's shift towards right-wing policy over more leftist ideals is a reflection of growing public support for restrictions on Japanese citizenship and coexistence with others.

Further evidence of the rising right-wing in Japan is presented by reporter Justin McCurry, who's article called attention to how the overtly far-right political party, Sanseito, has seen a dramatic increase in voter support following their July 2025 campaign.⁹¹ Current leader of the so-called "Japanese First" party, Sohei Kamiya, has rallied supporters through vocalizing anti-foreigner statements, anti-Korean slurs against the Zainichi Korean population, and promoting militarism via visits to the Yasukuni war shrine.⁹² The alignment with the right-wing populist sentiments of the *netto uyoku* with Kamiya's platform cannot be ignored. While there has been protest amongst the Japanese public, particularly by human rights advocacy groups, against Kamiya's radically offensive platform, it has done little to discourage he and his party.⁹³ In fact, the Sanseito party's claimed registered members grew from less than 3,000 to over 90,000 between 2020 and 2025.⁹⁴

⁸⁹9. Nikaido, sec. 25-28.

⁹⁰0. Nikaido, sec. 3-4.

⁹¹1. McCurry, "mini-Trump on the rise," sec. 1-3.

⁹²2. McCurry, sec. 11-15.

⁹³3. McCurry, sec. 14-16.

⁹⁴4. McCurry, sec. 16.

Through analyses of the LDP platforms and the Sanseito party's values as of the 2025 election, the growth in support for an uncontaminated Japan is clear.

Conclusion

Traces of nationalism exist in Japan's history as far back as the eighteenth century, beginning with the *Kokugaku* school of thought. At the time, the Japanese identity was formed through distinguishing itself from the rest of Asia, particularly China and Korea. Upon entering the post-war era, Japanese nationalism left Asia in the past and brought the country's relationship with the West to the forefront of identity discussion. *Kokugaku* became *nihonjinron* as blatant nationalism turned unpalatable to a public facing immediate economic and cultural insecurity. Today, the rise of the Japanese right is represented through the *netto uyoku*, the LDP, the Sanseito party, and Japanese governmental responses to globalization that reflect Japan's wish to reclaim a national identity by defining it themselves. The history of Japanese nationalism reflects the nation-state's unique position between the East and the West, with the two forces holding fluctuating influence over Japan's nationalist identity over time. Despite the noteworthy non-Western relations that have contributed greatly to the formulation of Japanese nationalism, the nation has still fallen prey to the same troubling fate as various Western democracies in the age of globalization. The future of neo-nationalism in Japan and across the globe is of grave concern, in consideration of the historical damages inflicted upon all those deemed as foreign. What can be understood, however, is that the most authentic aspect of Japan's identity is its commitment to nationalism since its very inception.

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