

# **Japan Lower House Election - Poll platform revised to pursue new Constitution — Japan Restoration Party qualifies nuclear phaseout goal**

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Nippon Ishin no Kai (Japan Restoration Party), the “third force” emerging as a serious challenger to the political status quo, unveiled a watered-down version of its election platform Thursday devoid of a definitive road map for phasing out nuclear power.

Kansai endorsement: Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto stumps Thursday in Shinjuku Ward for Tokyo Vice Gov. Naoki Inose as former Gov. Shintaro Ishihara looks on. KYODO

Instead, the party merely stated in a separate document that nuclear power plants are to “fade out by the 2030s” – the same goal that Prime Minister Noda’s Democratic Party of Japan has included on its platform.

When Nippon Ishin founder and Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto agreed to merge parties with pronuclear former Tokyo Gov. Shintaro Ishihara’s short-lived party in late November, Nippon Ishin’s nuclear phaseout clause disappeared, prompting speculation the omission would become permanent.

The platform released Thursday also contains a provision for drafting a new Constitution – apparently a concession from Hashimoto, now the party’s deputy leader, to the more experienced Ishihara, the unabashed nationalist responsible for escalating the Senkaku dispute with China and Taiwan.

When asked why his party won’t present a clear-cut time frame for eliminating nuclear power, Hashimoto said it would take several years to come up with a detailed road map.

“The bureaucrats are the ones who would map out a road map,” Hashimoto told a news conference. “Politicians are the ones who show” which direction policies should take, he said, implying that setting a time frame wasn’t his party’s responsibility.

Ishihara has said the amount of energy the economy actually needs must be calculated before making such a decision. Hashimoto expounded on that.

“Ever since the accident (at the Fukushima No. 1 plant) happened, we have had to re-examine” our energy policy, but “what matters most is whether we can actually realize (a nuclear phaseout),” he said.

The move came a day after Shiga Gov. Yukiko Kada officially formed Nippon Mirai no To (Japan Future Party) and said its primary aim will be to phase out nuclear power by 2022.

Nippon Ishin’s diluted platform states it will aim to create a nation not reliant on nuclear power, set stricter safety standards and promote the liberalization of the electricity market.

It also says it will promote participation in the Trans-Pacific Partnership free-trade talks but oppose them “if it would be against the national interest.”

TPP entry is also a DPJ goal.

Nippon Ishin also pledged to draft a new Constitution and ease restrictions on arms use by Self-Defense Forces personnel during peacekeeping missions.

SDF personnel are allowed under the Peacekeeping Operation Law to use weapons only in legitimate self-defense situations. They are forbidden from using arms, for instance, to rescue fellow citizens or counter attacks on other countries’ troops.

Before merging with Ishihara’s party, Nippon Ishin advocated halving the size of the Lower House to 480 members and limiting their responsibilities to such fields as diplomacy, but Thursday’s platform softened that goal to a reduction of 30 to 50 percent.

It also proposed a rule change for the Upper House that would lift the ban on councilors concurrently holding Diet and local government posts Å a change that would allow Hashimoto, for instance, to run in the Upper House election next summer while still being Osaka’s mayor.

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\* November 30, 2012

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nn20121130a1.html>