

The Japanese Communist Party boosts its seat count in the House of Councillors

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Japanese Communist Party rides protest vote to major upper house gains

The Japanese Communist Party (JCP) took eight seats in the July 21 House of Councillors election, boosting its seat count in the chamber to 11 and considerably expanding its influence.

The JCP garnered three seats in the Tokyo, Osaka and Kyoto electoral districts, and another five in the proportional representation bloc. The electoral district wins represented the party's first since the upper house race in 2001.

The party's success on Sunday was clear evidence of voter dissatisfaction with the Abe administration. The results were also an extension of its surge in the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly election in June, when it jumped from eight seats to 17 propelled by campaign messages challenging the ruling Liberal Democratic Party.

"Many citizens are experiencing a sense of crisis and malaise with respect to the LDP administration," commented JCP Chairman Kazuo Shii during a press conference held the night of July 21. "This election result clearly indicates that the JCP has been recognized as a trustworthy party that is capable of putting the brakes on the LDP, which has spun out of control."

"We've secured a strong foothold that will allow us to turn around and go on the offensive," he continued, also noting with satisfaction that Sunday's result was the first major success of its kind for the JCP since the party picked up seats in seven electoral districts in the 1998 upper house election.

"The days of the two-party system — with only the LDP and the Democratic Party of Japan — are over," Shii continued, positioning the JCP as a coherent force within the Diet while also distancing it from other opposition parties. "Other parties such as the Japan Restoration Party are merely complementary parties to the LDP."

"Abenomics has not even one arrow in its quiver with which to increase regular people's earnings — and the matter of restarting nuclear reactors is unthinkable," Shii declared. He also took strong issue with ruling party policies on constitutional revision, participation in Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) discussions, an impending consumption tax increase and nuclear power.

Energized by last month's success in the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly election, the party focused its efforts for the July 21 election on random telephone campaigning, as well as flyers that explained the JCP's basic policy stances. The party focused especially on picking up support among non-affiliated voters.

The JCP's success at the polls also indicates that other opposition parties are losing momentum. While criticizing the ruling party, the JCP's election strategy also focused on putting forth counterproposals, such as calling on major corporations to use their cash reserves for wage increases, and spearheading international peacemaking based upon Article 9 of Japan's Constitution,

which bans Japan from formal possession of a military.

It remains to be seen, however, whether such proposals will actually be put into practice within the political sphere.

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P.S.

* <http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20130722p2a00m0na021000c.html>