

EDITORIAL

Japan : Populist storm in Osaka

vendredi 27 avril 2012, par [Japan Times](#) (Date de rédaction antérieure : 1er décembre 2011).

The charisma of former Osaka Gov. Toru Hashimoto lifted Osaka Ishin no Kai (meaning literally « Association for Osaka Reformation »), a local party led by him, to overwhelming victories in two elections Sunday.

Mr. Hashimoto trounced incumbent Osaka Mayor Kunio Hiramatsu in the Osaka mayoral election, and Mr. Ichiro Matsui, Mr. Hashimoto's lieutenant, routed former Ikeda Mayor Kaoru Kurata in the prefectural gubernatorial election. The defeated candidates were supported by the Democratic Party of Japan and the Liberal Democratic Party.

Apparently the helplessness felt by many Osaka people amid economic stagnation and the sense that power is concentrated in Tokyo, boosted Mr. Hashimoto. More than 150,000 Osaka city residents are on welfare — about one of every 18 citizens, the highest rate in Japan. Mr. Hashimoto captured the hearts of Osaka voters with such bites as « Strong power, almost dictatorial, is needed to change today's politics » and « There will be no jobs by the time your children become grown. »

The established parties failed to present plans that would give hope to Osaka people. Neither the DPJ nor the LDP could overcome the populist rhetoric used by Mr. Hashimoto.

The Osaka poll results point to people's deepening distrust of the current DPJ administration and of the established parties for failing to work out policy measures to increase employment and revitalize the local economies. In light of Mr. Hashimoto's popularity, moves are afoot in the DPJ and the LDP to establish cooperative ties with his group. But at this point, people are likely to view these efforts as opportunistic and lacking in principle.

Mr. Hashimoto stepped down as Osaka governor halfway through his term to run in the mayoral poll, and let Mr. Matsui run for governor, in order to realize his idea of creating an Osaka metropolitan government like Tokyo's — especially in order to eradicate the overlapping administrative power of Osaka City and Osaka Prefecture and strengthen the Osaka economy.

But it is not clear how his ideas will help to revitalize Osaka and improve its people's well-being. He will have to work out the details and fully explain. He should realize that his method of vehemently attacking targeted politicians won't do.

The Japan Times

P.-S.

* The Japan Times. Thursday, Dec. 1, 2011

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/ed20111201a1.html>