

Japan New-right-wing Parties: Shintaro Ishihara & Toru Hashimoto

Tuesday 30 October 2012, by [AOKI Mizuho](#), [FUKUE Natsuko](#), [JOHNSTON Eric](#), [Kyodo News](#) (Date first published: 30 October 2012).

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New-right-wing parties: Ishihara-Hashimoto tieup seen as difficult — Hawkish allies share nationalist bent but differ on nuclear future

Tokyo Gov. Shintaro Ishihara's announcement Thursday that he is resigning to form a new national party marks the first step in his final major political push.

But one of Ishihara's key assumptions, that his new party will team up with Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto's Nippon Ishin no Kai (Japan Restoration Party), remains problematic due to unresolved differences, especially on the future of nuclear power.

Ishihara, 80, and Hashimoto are close personally and have long hoped to form a third political force able to challenge the ruling Democratic Party of Japan and the Liberal Democratic Party. But political experts say the influence Ishihara's envisioned party would wield in Nagata-cho could be far more limited.

"Whether Ishihara's party will be able to play a major role in national politics is not worth serious consideration," said analyst Minoru Morita, who estimates the Tokyo governor's group would win about a dozen seats at most in the next general election.

This number includes members of ultraconservative Takeo Hiranuma's Tachiagare Nippon (Sunrise Party of Japan) who are expected to join Ishihara. The minor opposition party currently has two Lower House members.

But the real question is whether Ishihara can reach an agreement with Nippon Ishin no Kai, which counts nine Diet members among its ranks, to cooperate before or after the next Lower House election.

Ishihara stopped short of saying if he envisages a formal alliance with Hashimoto's party, but said progress was being made in overcoming his differences with the Osaka mayor. "We've done a fair bit of policy alignment," Ishihara said Thursday.

Meanwhile, journalist Akihiro Otani argued Ishihara's announcement could create a political

opening for Nippon Ishin no Kai's chief, saying that by resigning, "Ishihara has just made it a lot easier for Hashimoto to run in a national election."

Hashimoto, however, sounded a more cautious note over a potential tieup, noting: "Unless our policies and values match those of the Tokyo governor, voters will not be convinced. This goes to the very identity of our party."

Though Japan's participation in the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade negotiations and constitutional revision are areas in which the two still have certain differences to resolve, their most fundamental disagreement is over the future role of nuclear power.

Still, Hashimoto's declaration that Nippon Ishin no Kai plans to eliminate all of Japan's atomic energy plants by the 2030s while continuing to back the export of nuclear technology is likely to appeal to the pronuclear Ishihara and other potential allies, including LDP President Shinzo Abe.

The fact that Hashimoto made the announcement Wednesday, just a couple days after Ishihara informed him of his plan to resign and establish a new national party, suggests a compromise on the issue may be close.

But even as the two continue to iron out their differences, Hashimoto must manage differing views within his own party.

Nippon Ishin no Kai's Diet members unveiled two new proposals Thursday on diplomacy - an area of the party's platform Hashimoto has previously indicated they should take charge of - calling for the departure of all U.S. forces in Japan by 2045 and for the government to make no compromises on the territorial disputes over the Senkaku and Takeshima islets, as well as the Russian-held islands off Hokkaido.

Hashimoto expressed concern that these proposals, which must be ratified by the whole party, are bad policies and bad politics.

"We need to think about this carefully, having learned from the DPJ's failed promise to move the U.S. Futenma air station out of Okinawa," said Hashimoto, adding that the only option he sees to resolve Japan's sovereignty disputes is through the International Court of Justice.

The exact role another small opposition group, Your Party, will play is also somewhat unclear, although most analysts expect its leader, Yoshimi Watanabe, and Hashimoto to form a formal alliance either before or after a general election. Officials from the two parties met in Osaka on Friday evening to explore possible forms of cooperation.

Watanabe, like Hashimoto, has voiced reservations about tying with Ishihara, especially since Your Party is relatively strong in eastern Japan and plans to field candidates in Tokyo and Kanagawa in the next Lower House election.

ERIC JOHNSTON and NATSUKO FUKUE, *Japan Times* Staff writers, October 27, 2012

* <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nn20121027a1.html>

Hashimoto's overtures to Ishihara, other hawks continue

OSAKA - Negotiations between Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto's Nippon Ishin no Kai (Japan Restoration Party), Your Party and departing Tokyo Gov. Shintaro Ishihara regarding political cooperation in the next general election continued over the weekend, with Hashimoto formally entrusted by his camp to make the final decision.

However, while Hashimoto has said the direction of Ishihara's new party, which has yet to be formally launched, will probably run parallel to that of Nippon Ishin no Kai, many of his supporters oppose a formal tieup with Takeo Hiranuma's Tachiagare Nippon (Sunrise Party of Japan), which will likely be folded into Ishihara's new party.

While Tachiagare Nippon officials have expressed hope of an alliance, Nippon Ishin no Kai members worry about policy differences with Hiranuma in areas like participation in the Trans-Pacific Partnership free-trade agreement. Several Ishin no Kai members told The Japan Times they were also concerned about Hiranuma's party's ultraright foreign policy views, especially toward China.

Meanwhile, Nippon Ishin no Kai and Your Party moved closer to a formal tieup by announcing Friday evening they would prepare a joint policy agreement by the end of November. The two parties are also expected to work out a deal where Nippon Ishin no Kai does not field candidates in districts where Your Party plans to run, and vice versa.

Your Party has 14 Diet members, while Nippon Ishin no Kai has nine.

"Both parties have to make an effort to align themselves in areas like the consumption tax hike and participation in the TPP," said Your Party's Kenji Eda after the meeting.

But it remains to be seen what kind of postelection political cooperation might be possible between Your Party and Ishihara's new party. Your Party head Yoshimi Watanabe and Ishihara are not close, and any alliance would only come after intense negotiations, and with Nippon Ishin no Kai acting as go-between.

While there are no immediate plans for a Lower House election, and the next Upper House poll is set for next summer, when the current Lower House members' terms also expire, Nippon Ishin no Kai says it has already identified 155 possible candidates for the next Lower House poll.

ERIC JOHNSTON, *Japan Times* Staff writer, October 30, 2012

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nn20121030a3.html>

Tokyo Gov. Ishihara quits to launch new party

TOKYO (Kyodo) — Tokyo Gov. Shintaro Ishihara, known for his nationalist views, said Thursday he will step down and launch a new political party, a move expected to spark political realignment ahead of the next general election and possibly further strain Japan's relations with China.

The 80-year-old Ishihara, a former Cabinet member who was reelected to a fourth four-year term as Tokyo governor last year, submitted a letter of resignation the same day.

Ishihara, a long-time China critic, announced in April that the Tokyo metropolitan government planned to purchase some of the Senkaku Islands, Japanese-controlled uninhabited islets also claimed by China in the East China Sea. That prompted Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda's government to purchase the group of islets from their private owner in September.

Ishihara, a writer-turned-politician, said one of the reasons for his return to national politics is the central government has not constructed a jetty for fishing boats and other facilities on the islands, a development plan pushed by Ishihara.

Chinese and South Korean media showed strong interest in Ishihara's return to national politics, closely watching a development that could greatly affect bilateral relations and cautioning Japanese politics could become more nationalistic.

Takeo Hiranuma, head of the Sunrise Party of Japan with which Ishihara is associated, said Thursday that the SPJ will be disbanded and all five of its parliamentarians will join Ishihara's new party. Ishihara's new party is likely to be launched in early November, Hiranuma said, adding other Diet members also may join.

Ishihara's move is apparently aimed at forming a third force that can take on the ruling Democratic Party of Japan and the main opposition Liberal Democratic Party in the next House of Representatives election, which must be held by next summer, lawmakers say.

Pundits believe if Ishihara stages a comeback to national politics, he could muster enough clout to trigger a political realignment, along with Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto, a lawyer-turned politician who was once a popular TV personality.

On Thursday, Ishihara said he will explore ways to join hands with Nippon Ishin no Kai (Japan Restoration Party), which Hashimoto recently created along with some Diet members.

In Osaka, Hashimoto also indicated an eagerness to work in tandem with the outgoing Tokyo governor. "I will have to have many discussions" with Ishihara, Hashimoto told reporters.

But to cooperate, their two parties will need to discuss policy issues they do not agree on, such as the future of nuclear power. Ishihara favors maintaining nuclear power, saying it is an economic necessity, while Hashimoto's party wants nuclear power phased out.

At the press conference, Ishihara lambasted the current government's policy of reducing the country's reliance on nuclear energy to zero by the 2030s.

Ishihara also pledged if elected to the Diet, he will work to amend the Constitution, criticizing it as one drafted under the strong influence of the United States after World War II.

Ishihara entered politics in 1968 at age 35 with election to the House of Councillors, winning 3 million votes from the national electorate.

Ishihara stirred international controversy with the publication of his 1989 book "The Japan That Can Say No," which he co-authored with then Sony Corp. Chairman Akio Morita. In it, Ishihara said Japan should tell the United States that it can protect itself without U.S. help.

Early this year, Ishihara, Hiranuma and Shizuka Kamei, the former leader of People's New Party, reportedly agreed to form a new political party in March. Ishihara, however, said in April he would review the plan from scratch, noting he should concentrate on moving ahead with his proposal to purchase the Senkakus.

During his terms as the Tokyo governor, he launched environmental measures, such as to ban diesel-powered commercial vehicles from running Tokyo streets unless they meet a limit on emissions of dangerous particles, the first in Japan regulating emissions from such vehicles.

Kyodo Press, October 25, 2012

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20121025p2g00m0dm063000c.html>

Ishihara to resign, form new political party – Outspoken nationalist says he wants to take his case countrywide

In a surprise move, Tokyo Gov. Shintaro Ishihara announced Thursday he will resign and return to the national arena by launching a new political party that can battle the Democratic Party of Japan and Liberal Democratic Party in the next Lower House election.

Later in the day, Ishihara submitted his letter of resignation to the chairman of the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly, in effect giving 30 days' notice. The election to replace him will be held no more than 55 days from Thursday.

The 80-year-old former author said he would launch the party with Diet members later in the evening, and he plans to run in the next Lower House election on the proportional representation segment of the ballot.

Ishihara said he will be the leader of the new party, which is expected to include members of Tachiagare Nippon (Sunrise Party of Japan). He said at least five Diet members, the minimum required to be recognized as a national political party under election laws, will join up with him.

How much influence the party will have on the national level remains to be seen.

Ishihara was once regarded as a key player in a possible realignment of existing political parties, but public attention shifted to Nippon Ishin no Kai (Japan Restoration Party) led by Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto, who has gained popularity among voters frustrated with the DPJ and LDP.

Ishihara said he wants to cooperate with Nippon Ishin no Kai but didn't elaborate.

If Ishihara, who has previously held ministerial posts, stages a comeback to the national arena, he could have enough clout to trigger a political realignment, along with Hashimoto, who came to fame as a TV celebrity.

"I will have to have many discussions" with Ishihara, Hashimoto said Thursday in Osaka, indicating his eagerness to work with the outspoken nationalist.

During his resignation announcement, Ishihara said, "I want to change the bureaucracy system that has been continued since the Meiji Era . . . I want to serve (the country) as my last job."

He didn't discuss what policies his new party will advocate.

He did, however, repeat his usual call to revise the Constitution, saying it was created by the U.S. during the Occupation after World War II. "There is no other country in the world where such (a

charter) established by occupation forces remains after a country becomes independent," Ishihara said.

He also advocated building a fishing harbor in the Senkaku Islands, the islets in the East China Sea claimed by China and Taiwan. Ishihara's attempt to buy three of the five uninhabited islets prompted the central government to purchase them in September, touching off Japan's current diplomatic crisis with China.

As for candidates for his new party, Ishihara said 30 to 40 students of Tachiagare Nippon's political leadership institute would be strong contenders in the next Lower House election.

Ishihara entered politics in 1968 at age 35, winning a seat in the Upper House on the back of 3 million votes from the national constituency. He switched his turf to the Lower House in 1972 and later served as chief of the old Environment Agency and as transport minister under the LDP, having been elected to the chamber eight times. He resigned from the Diet in 1995.

(Information from Kyodo added)

MIZUHO AOKI, *Japan Times* Staff writer, October 26, 2012

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nn20121026a1.html>

JRP: Ishin no Kai dittos Noda no-nuke aim

OSAKA - In a controversial move, Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto's new national party will publicly pledge to eliminate atomic power by the 2030s even as it supports the export of nuclear technology and expertise overseas.

The 2030s goal mirrors the one initially pushed by Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda of the ruling Democratic Party of Japan. His Cabinet failed to endorse it.

Hashimoto's new pledges reflect his long-stated desire to eventually end Japan's addiction to atomic power and to switch to renewable forms of energy instead. The campaign platform of Nippon Ishin no Kai (Japan Restoration Party) mentions this goal, but does not set a specific target date for achieving it.

The inclusion of the new target represents something of a compromise with those in Hashimoto's fledgling party and corporate backers.

Many Nippon Ishin no Kai members and business leaders who support it are pronuclear and did not want any mention of nuclear power in its platform.

Some senior party members were also concerned about how an overtly antinuclear stance would go down with potential allies who favor retaining atomic energy, including Liberal Democratic Party chief Shinzo Abe, with whom the party still hopes to form some sort of alliance after the next general election.

But even as Nippon Ishin no Kai will seek to scrap atomic energy at home, it will continue to push Japanese nuclear technology on other nations planning to build their own atomic plants.

ERIC JOHNSTON, *Japan Times* Staff writer, October 26, 2012

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nn20121026b3.html>
