

New-right-wing parties: merger in Japan Restoration Party

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Merger of Taiyo no To and Nippon Ishin No Kai

Shintaro Ishihara, Tokyo's former governor and the outspoken new president of Nippon Ishin no Kai (Japan Restoration Party), will run in the capital's proportional representation block in next month's general election, the party's founder, Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto, announced Sunday.

Appearing on a TV program, Hashimoto said Ishihara, who merged his Taiyo no To (The Sunrise Party) group with Ishin no Kai on Saturday to create a third force in the nation's politics, does not plan to seek election to the House of Representatives by running in any single-seat constituency.

Hashimoto also told reporters Sunday in Osaka that Nippon Ishin no Kai plans to field at least 241 candidates in the 480-seat Lower House election Dec. 16, adding Ishihara will travel "across the country" to drum up support among voters. On Saturday, Ishihara was appointed party president, while Hashimoto will now serve as deputy leader.

The former members of Taiyo no To, which was only created Tuesday, had to reverse some of their stances on key policies during last-minute talks and accept Hashimoto's ideas -notably his support for Japan's participation in the Trans-Pacific Partnership free-trade accord - to allow the merger to go ahead.

However, Osaka's mayor in turn had to abandon his hopes of eliminating nuclear power by the 2030s.

Whether the two camps effectively created within Nippon Ishin no Kai by the merger will clash over other critical policy areas remains to be seen, while Ishihara and Hashimoto's ability to work together is also being closely watched.

Ishihara advocates maintaining the nation's nuclear power plants, whereas Hashimoto had pushed for their complete abolition. And though Ishihara is "cautious" about Japan joining the ongoing TPP negotiations to create a regional free-trade framework, Hashimoto broadly supports the move.

During its brief existence, Taiyo no To was widely viewed as an ultraconservative and highly nationalistic party comprised of elderly Diet veterans. The ability of Nippon Ishin no Kai, which has enjoyed considerable popularity under Hashimoto's stewardship, to make further inroads with the electorate with Ishihara at the helm is another major focal point.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda and his Democratic Party of Japan have wasted no time in attacking the merger, arguing it is an "illicit union" that papers over fundamental policy differences and was only formed because a general election was called for December.

Kyodo Press, Japan Times staff report, November 19, 2012

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nn20121119a2.html>

Ishihara's news conference at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan

Shintaro Ishihara, leader of the Sunrise Party and freshly anointed president of the new Japan Restoration Party (JRP), says he decided to return to national politics because of a 92-year-old war widow's poem deploring the country's sorry state and longing for her deceased husband.

Ishihara, a prizewinning author, related the episode during a packed news conference at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan (FCCJ) on Nov. 20 to elaborate on his decision to run in the Dec. 16 House of Representatives election. "I share the same view" on the country's deteriorating state with the elderly woman, he said.

The 80-year-old quit as Tokyo governor in October and formed the Sunrise Party soon after. Ishihara and Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto, who doubles as JRP leader, said Nov. 17 that their new political parties would merge ahead of the general election. The two men will serve as JRP chief and deputy chief, respectively.

Ishihara acknowledged that there are differences of opinion between the two parties. But he added that the two budding parties share three major objectives of restoring Japan's strength, ending the centralized bureaucracy system and revitalizing the Japanese economy by capitalizing on the vitality of small and mid-sized companies.

When asked about the row with China over the Japanese-administered Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea, Ishihara pointed to China's policy on Tibet, saying, "When we consider that China may pursue its hegemonic policy, I want to do everything in my power to make sure that Japan does not become a second Tibet." While underscoring the importance of Japan's alliance with the United States, he suggested that Japan should consider forging ties with the Philippines and Vietnam, which also have territorial disputes with Beijing.

Ishihara said he is not against Japan's participation in the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) free trade negotiations per se but cannot condone Washington's request that Japan remove stickers from genetically modified food. He also voiced concerns about a quick end to nuclear energy, saying Japan should conduct pertinent economic simulations and nuclear energy dependence analysis before implementing measures to keep the Japanese economy running.

Shiro Yoneyama, Staff Writer, *Mainichi Shimbun*, November 20, 2012

Ishihara, Hiranuma unveil new party

Former Tokyo Gov. Shintaro Ishihara launched his new political party Tuesday along with five lawmakers, vowing to create a “stronger and tougher Japan” by tying up with other small parties before the next Lower House election.

Ishihara’s new party, Taiyo no To (The Sunrise Party), incorporated all five members of the conservative Tachiagare Nippon (Sunrise Party of Japan). Ishihara and Tachiagare Nippon chief Takeo Hiranuma were named the party’s coleaders.

With the establishment of the party, Ishihara aims to form a third force to take down the ruling Democratic Party of Japan and keep the Liberal Democratic Party, the main opposition force, from regaining power in the next election, which could come as early as next month.

“Taiyo no To is merely a channel to form a coalition (with other small parties) regardless of minor differences,” Ishihara told reporters. “We most definitely will unite (with other parties) in the common interest before the next election.”

Hiranuma said the party will field candidates in 11 electoral blocs in the next election.

The party’s key policy includes establishment of an independent Constitution, beefing up of Japan’s defense capabilities, and fundamental reform of fiscal management and tax systems to make them more transparent.

The focus now will be on whether Taiyo no To can tie up with other parties, including Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto’s Nippon Ishin no Kai (Japan Restoration Party) and the small Your Party, despite fundamental differences in policies on the future of nuclear power and the upcoming consumption tax hike.

Top officials of Taiyo no To reportedly plan to have another meeting with Nippon Ishin no Kai on Saturday to discuss a tieup.

Ishihara, 80, a former novelist, abruptly quit the governor’s job last month.

MIZUHO AOKI, *Japan Times* staff writer, November 14, 2012

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nn20121114a2.html>

New-right-wing parties: Parties led by Hashimoto, Ishihara announce merger

OSAKA (Kyodo) — Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto and former Tokyo Gov. Shintaro Ishihara said

Saturday their new political parties will be merged ahead of next month's general election to counter major ruling and opposition parties.

The merger of the mayor's Japan Restoration Party and the Sunrise Party formed by Ishihara, announced at a joint news conference of the two outspoken politicians, will form a so-called "third force" to challenge the ruling Democratic Party of Japan and the largest opposition party, the Liberal Democratic Party, in the national election on Dec. 16.

The Sunrise Party will be dissolved and its members will join the Japan Restoration Party, with Ishihara becoming its chief and Hashimoto serving as the acting head.

Minor opposition Genzei Nippon (Tax Cut Japan) led by Nagoya Mayor Takashi Kawamura will not join the force as announced earlier after Hashimoto's party voiced concerns over differences in their policies. Kawamura told reporters later Saturday he has not given up the plan to ally with the Japan Restoration Party.

Ishihara proposed the merger to Hashimoto two weeks ago, and the Japan Restoration Party, in return, asked the Sunrise Party to accept the policies it had compiled along with the minor opposition Your Party.

Your Party headed by Yoshimi Watanabe will not be integrated into the coalition, although it will cooperate with them in the election campaign.

Kyodo Press, November 18, 2012

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20121118p2a00m0na009000c.html>

Ishihara rattles saber against China — Nuclear 'simulation' swagger is coupled with sympathy for Tibetans, call for defense buildup

Shintaro Ishihara, the new head of Nippon Ishin no Kai (Japan Restoration Party), remained true to his China-hawk form Tuesday by saying Japan should "simulate" possessing nuclear arms as a deterrent to Beijing.

Ishihara's remark during a news conference at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan in Tokyo, is likely to ruffle feathers both at home and abroad, especially amid the territorial row with China over the Senkaku Islands.

"It's high time Japan made simulations of possessing nuclear arms," Ishihara said. "That would become a form of deterrent" against China's possible military encroachment.

The 80-year-old former Tokyo governor also said the defense budget should be increased while dealing with China in a "calm but resolute manner."

"We need to say no to China when necessary because I don't want Japan to be like Tibet, which has fallen under Chinese power," said Ishihara, who coauthored the best-selling essay "The Japan That Can Say No" in 1989 with late Sony cofounder Akio Morita. The book urges Japan to become more assertive in international affairs.

"I feel so sorry for the Tibetan people," he said.

Ishihara repeatedly referred to China as "Shina," the name often associated with Japan's military occupation during the war, instead of "Chugoku," the Japanese word for the country.

"Shina is not a negative word. And for Japanese, Chugoku means Hiroshima and Okayama" Å\ the Chugoku region in western Honshu, he said.

Ishihara asserted that most Japanese agree with him that Japan should deal with China in a calm but assertive manner when conflict arises.

The platform of Nippon Ishin no Kai, which was founded by Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto, states the party will urge China to agree to bring the Senkaku dispute to the International Court of Justice for a ruling on which country has sovereignty over the rocky islets long held by Japan.

Ishihara said defense spending, now limited to 1 percent of the national budget, should be boosted.

"I think the skills of the Japanese military industry are high," he said, voicing his personal view. "Why not boost the ability of (the nation's) self-defense?"

Ishihara said he basically supports the U.S.-led Trans-Pacific Partnership free-trade talks but then added "he cannot forgive" the U.S. promotion of genetically modified food. The TPP is opposed by farmers who fear it would lead to a flood of cheap, imported produce after tariff barriers are removed.

He said the government should not rush to abandon nuclear power and instead calculate how the economy would fare without such energy. "Hashimoto and I agree that we should do such calculations," he said.

Hashimoto had advocated abandoning nuclear power by the 2030s and had earlier said his party would pursue this goal. But in consideration of Ishihara's stance, he did not include this in the joint statement issued Saturday when his party absorbed Ishihara's four-day-old group.

NATSUKO FUKUE, Japan Times staff writer, November 21, 2012

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nn20121121a3.html>

Ishihara targets over 100 seats in next Lower House election

Tokyo's former governor, Shintaro Ishihara, on Sunday set a target of seizing more than 100 seats in the next general election, providing he can form a political group strong enough to challenge the ruling and largest opposition parties.

"Of course I would like to win over 100" of the Lower House's 480 seats in the next national vote, Ishihara, who plans to found a new political party by incorporating minor opposition groups, said during a TV show.

To that end, the former governor hopes to woo Tachiagare Nippon (Sunrise Party of Japan) and Your Party, and is also hoping to join hands with Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto's Nippon Ishin no Kai

(Japan Restoration Party) in the runup to the next Lower House election, which must be held by next summer.

Following his sudden resignation as governor, Ishihara met with Hashimoto and Tachiagare Nippon chief Takeo Hiranuma on Saturday in the city of Kyoto and urged them to accelerate efforts to create a “third force” able to compete with the ruling Democratic Party of Japan and the Liberal Democratic Party, the leading opposition group.

The three agreed to continue talks for the time being on possible ways Nippon Ishin no Kai, Tachiagare Nippon and Ishihara’s envisaged party could cooperate the next time the nation goes to the polls.

However, Hashimoto voiced reluctance to forge closer ties with Tachiagare Nippon during the meeting, citing key policy differences on nuclear power and the planned consumption tax hike.

The mayor is apparently still willing to work closely with Ishihara on a personal level, but Ishihara said Sunday that his talks with Hashimoto had “not been substantive,” as the two remain divided over the future of atomic energy and other major policy areas.

Kyodo Press, November 5, 2012

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nn20121105a4.html>
