

Voters' Choice to Reject Nuclear Phase-out

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Former Prime Minister Naoto Kan was defeated by his Liberal Democratic Party rival in the December 16 House of Representatives election after his campaigns where he stood on a beer case with a banner calling for "Zero Nuclear Plant," making Japan's direction clear. Although he eventually managed to get a lower house seat under a proportional representation system, voters' disapproval of the former prime minister in a single-seat constituency indicates that voters flatly rejected the policies of his Democratic Party of Japan to phase out nuclear power plants, compromise with China and oppose amendments to the Constitution.

LDP dominantly won in nuclear plant-located constituencies

For example, the LDP won in 11 of the 13 constituencies where nuclear power plants are located. Jun Azumi from the DPJ won in the Miyagi No. 5 constituency with the Onagawa nuclear plant and Takeshi Noma from the People's New Party in the Kagoshima No. 3 constituency with the Sendai nuclear plant. But the DPJ saw the number of its lower house seats plunging from 230 to 57 in the election, posting the largest ever loss since its founding. The number of lower house seats also declined sharply from 62 to eight for the newly-formed Tomorrow Party of Japan that called for graduating from nuclear plants. Lower house seats declined further from very low levels for the Japanese Communist Party calling for an immediate dismantlement of all nuclear plants and the Social Democratic Party seeking to immediately reduce nuclear reactors in operation to zero.

Tomorrow Party leader Yukiko Kada attributed the defeat to the new party's failure to diffuse its assertion. But the diffusion of its assertion could have led to further decline in the number of its seats.

The LDP won the historically big victory by pledging to position nuclear power plants as a pillar of Japan's energy policy and take three years to prudently determine the best energy mix. This mirrored voters' deviation from anti-nuclear plant campaigns fueled by many newspapers and television stations.

Voters might have acknowledged that Japan without nuclear plants would fall short of developing its industry, drop out from international competition and fail to promote its economy or expand social welfare, healthcare, nursing care and education support. Voters have had their own perspective for national management. A series of media reports

lacking this perspective have been completely wrong.

Clear support for beefing up defense

This is the same case with national security issue. Media criticized the LDP for using the word of "National Defense Forces" in its Constitutional amendment proposal instead of "Self-Defense Forces" used in the current legal system.

Media also rapped LDP President Shinzo Abe for calling for stationing public servants on the Senkaku Islands, while the DPJ government hesitated to take territorial defense measures behind its pledge to coolly address the matter after its purchase of the islands claimed by China. But the LDP's dominant victory might have indicated voters' belief that it is delusive for the DPJ government to turn a blind eye to China's growing threats around Japan and assert that the best choice is to leave the Senkaku Islands defenseless.

Voters have chosen to support Japan's own defense efforts, instead of the irresponsible approach of leaving other countries to defend the nation and the people's lives as provided in the preamble to the Constitution. This is the reason the DPJ, which has failed to propose any Constitutional amendments, was defeated along with the Tomorrow Party, Social Democratic Party and Communist Party that have called for protecting the present Constitution. In contrast, the LDP and Japan Restoration Party headed by former Tokyo governor Shintaro Ishihara won in the election by coming up with Constitutional amendments and asking how Japan should be. I have felt confident anew that we should have confidence in voters' ability to think and should continue questioning how Japan's basic policies ought to be.

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