

**LANDSLIDE FOR LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC
PARTY'S 2012 LOWER HOUSE ELECTION
IN JAPAN: A LEAN TO THE RIGHT?**

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Executive Summary

1. The Abe-led Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) won a stable majority of 294 out of 480 seats in the Lower House enabling it to chair and dominate all the legislative committees of that chamber.
2. The LDP-New Komeito ruling coalition has a super majority of 325 (slightly more than a two thirds majority in the Lower House), and is thus able to override any Upper House veto.
3. The rightwing Nippon Ishin no Kai (Japan Restoration Party) made its electoral debut and won 54 seats signifying the rise of a “third force” further to the right of the ideological spectrum than the LDP.
4. The combined strength of the two rightwing parties after the 2012 Lower House Election is 348 out of 480 seats (294 LDP seats + 54 JRP seats). That the two parties of the right comprise 72.5% of the Lower House suggests that Japanese politics today is dominated by the right.
5. The New Komeito is however traditionally more concerned about welfare for the masses than the rightist agenda of historical revisionism, constitutional change and increased defense spending. Conceivably, the New Komeito will check the LDP if the latter tries to move too far to the right.
6. Although the parties of the right have gained more than two thirds of the Lower House seats, this is probably less of a ringing voter endorsement of the rightwing agenda and more of a rejection of the DPJ’s poor track record as a ruling party.
7. Abe Shinzo as prime minister is likely to pragmatically concentrate on Japan’s economic recovery, reconstruction from the 2011 Triple Disasters, and possibly improve relations with China. Abe is likely to avoid a radical shift to the right and alienating the electorate especially when the next Upper House Election will take place in July 2013.

8. Besides a hike in public works spending, Abe has also proposed the introduction of an inflation target of 2% to end Japan's chronic deflation. He is likely to appoint a new governor to the Bank of Japan who supports quantitative easing to stimulate the Japanese economy next April.
9. The Abe administration may pursue the following: revise history textbooks, deny responsibility for the plight of the "comfort women", raise military spending above 1% GDP, change the name and function of the Self Defense Force to National Defense Force, ease arms exports, and reinterpret the Constitution to permit Japan to engage in collective security.
10. Revising the pacifist constitution would be a clear shift to the right by Japan. But it will be difficult for Abe and other rightwing politicians to do so because they require a two thirds majority in both the Lower and Upper Houses followed by the consent of the people in a national referendum.