

**THE JAPANESE UPPER HOUSE  
ELECTION 2022**

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## Executive Summary

1. Japanese Prime Minister Kishida Fumio in his election campaign promised to lighten the impact of the rising costs of living and strengthen Japan's defence sparked off by the Russian invasion of Ukraine widely regarded as a violation of international law.
2. The Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan (CDPJ) campaigned on the slogan of the "Kishida inflation". It was defined by opposition parties as stagnating wages, high consumer prices and struggling consumers alongside a weaker yen arising from bold monetary easing by the Bank of Japan (BOJ) which has hiked import prices.
3. After Abe Shinzo's assassination, threats to democracy dominated voters' concerns. The assassination has brought major political leaders standing in unison across party lines and resolving not to give in to violence.
4. Nippon Ishin no Kai (Japan Innovation Party) made strong progress in the chamber, doubling its gains to win 12 seats, outperforming the main opposition party of CDPJ in proportional representation voting.
5. The demise of Abe (the leader of the largest faction in the Liberal Democratic Party [LDP]) was perceived to have generated sympathy votes for a strong upper house electoral victory in July 2022 by the LDP.
6. LDP and the conservative forces/allies secured two-thirds majority. The conservatives already have two-thirds majority in the lower house.
7. This then potentially clears the way for a national referendum to let the voters decide on the revision of the post-war Constitution to allow Japan to become a 'normal' state (clarification of the Self-Defence Forces' legal status, right to defend itself and powers to deal with emergencies).

8. Conservatives like Sanae Takaichi are keen to ensure that Kishida does not stray from Abe's goal of constitutional amendment, an item that Kishida has maintained on his political agenda thus far.
9. The liberal Kishida faction (fourth largest within the LDP with slightly more than 90 members) will need to reach out to the conservatives (kept under strong Abe leadership and skilful coordination before his unexpected death) to strive for party unity. Current consensus within the party is a collective leadership of the faction.
10. After uniting LDP's internal faction, Kishida would have to canvass for support from other political parties for his political agendas such as boosting defence spending of up to 2% or uplifting Japan's gross domestic product.

# THE JAPANESE UPPER HOUSE ELECTION 2022

LIM Tai Wei\*

## 2022 Upper House Electioneering Strategies of the Ruling/Opposition Parties

- 1.1 In the July 2022 Upper House election, 125 seats were contested (almost 50% of the 248-member upper chamber, including three additional seats from the electoral reforms plus a vacancy in the uncontested half of the chamber). The Upper House election was won by the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) with 63 seats while its coalition partner Komeito won 13 seats. During the campaigning, Prime Minister Kishida Fumio promised to reduce rising costs of living and strengthen Japan's defence triggered by the Russian invasion of Ukraine which was perceived as a lack of rule of law in the international arena.
- 1.2 Annex A shows that voters' concerns were mainly driven by economic measures and diplomacy/security issues. Fears of a similar situation happening in East Asia are apparent. Kishida was forceful in condemning the Russo-Ukrainian war as a one-sided attempt to alter the status quo by force which could unravel the global order. In addition to the Russian invasion, nuclear-armed North Korea and worsening China-US rivalry were also cited as security challenges.
- 1.3 Economically, Prime Minister Kishida blamed inflation (an important voters' concern) on the Russo-Ukrainian War but this was contested and blamed as "Kishida inflation" by the main opposition party, Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan (CDPJ). "Kishida inflation" is defined by opposition parties as stagnating wages and high consumer prices. This became a major point of attack on Kishida by opposition parties citing high consumer prices and struggling consumers. Kishida

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was also painted as being out of touch with the ordinary person in the street.<sup>1</sup> The mass media trained its sights on a weaker yen arising from bold monetary easing by the Bank of Japan (BOJ) which has hiked import prices for resource-deficient Japan.

1.4 Izumi Kenta, chief of the CDPJ, insisted to the mass media on 4 June 2022 in Sendai that “[t]he current Kishida administration isn’t taking any measures against the price rises of more than 10,000 items...People’s lives will not be able to survive against the high cost of living” and critiqued Kishida’s ability to “listen to the people”.<sup>2</sup> Such attacks before the election sufficiently spooked some ruling LDP leaders like Fukuda Tatsuo, chairperson of the LDP’s General Council, who noted at a news briefing on 31 May 2022: “I am worried about the price increases...We should provide people with peace of mind” while LDP Secretary-General Motegi Toshimitsu articulated at the party’s Ehime prefectural chapter in Matsuyama on 5 June 2022: “Globally, Japan is not the only country experiencing price increases...We need to thoroughly explain this to local people, too”.<sup>3</sup>

1.5 Calvary support for the LDP came from a governmental supplementary budget and its coalition partner Komeito which emphathises with the working class for the consumer price hikes (especially in terms of food prices). The ruling LDP coalition legislated the supplementary budget bill through the Diet to drum up subsidies to ease increased energy prices and provide cash handouts for low-income families with children as a pre-election measure to sweeten the ground for the upper house election. On 5 June 2022, in a media briefing, Yamaguchi Natsuo, chief of coalition partner Komeito Party, added: “We plan to consider measures to prevent price surges from drastically changing people’s dietary habits”.<sup>4</sup>

1.6 Besides CDPJ, many opposition parties attack the supplementary budget on their own platform. Shii Kazuo, chief of the Japanese Communist Party, argued that the

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<sup>1</sup> Uechi, Kazuki and Tamiyuki Kihara, “Opposition attacks ‘Kishida inflation’ ahead of Diet election” dated 7 June 2022 in *The Asahi Shimbun* [downloaded on 7 June 2022]. available at <https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/14639348>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

supplementary budget is “completely insufficient...When people are suffering this much, the government is doing absolutely nothing”.<sup>5</sup> However, the opposition’s failure to forge a united front in the single district constituencies in 2022 contrasted with the 2019 Upper House election, indicating the weakness of opposition parties in Japan.

1.7 In fact, an opposition party, the Democratic Party for the People (DPP), even voted in favour of the supplementary budget as DPP party head Tamaki Yuichiro has somewhat approved of the government’s management of price hikes even though he urged for more help for the people after the autumn season: “I approved the government’s handling of the gasoline price surge. But it is insufficient that the government has not shown prospects for similar measures after autumn”.<sup>6</sup>

1.8 After Abe’s assassination, threats to democracy dominated voters’ concerns. The assassination prompted major political leaders to unite across party lines and resolve not to give in to violence that suppresses free speech. In Yamanashi prefecture, Kishida vowed: “We will never give in to violence. I will stand before you until the very end (of this campaign)”, condemning the shooting as a “barbaric act that challenged the foundation of democracy”.<sup>7</sup> He also refused to cancel Sunday’s election to ensure freedom and fairness of the election<sup>8</sup> even though electoral campaigning was suspended for a day in this election.

1.9 Politicians like Kishida who was campaigning for his party members as the LDP’s chief was undeterred by the assassination and spoke to his party’s supporters at close proximity of approximately five metres.<sup>9</sup> He did however replace warm customary fist bumps with voters for hands-waving.<sup>10</sup> Izumi Kenta, leader of CDPJ, who was

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Kyodo, “Upper house election campaign nears end as Abe’s death shocks Japan” dated 9 July 2022 in Mainichi Japan [downloaded on 9 July 2022], available at <https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20220709/p2g/00m/0na/010000c>.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

protected by more police personnel after Abe's death also refused to be intimidated: "This should never have taken place. We should not yield to terrorism".<sup>11</sup>

- 1.10 Many eyes were also watching if Nippon Isshin no kai, an Osaka-based party, would be making any headway to other regions of Japan. The fourth-largest party in the upper house (after the LDP's coalition partner Komeito), conservative Nippon Ishin no Kai (Japan Innovation Party) wanted to increase its seats in parliament in the 2022 upper house election after winning 30 seats to become the third-largest party in that chamber in the 2021 lower house election. It was keen to expand its support beyond its founding stronghold of Osaka in the Kansai region.
- 1.11 During the campaigning period, Baba Nobuyuki, co-chairperson of Nippon Ishin no Kai, attacked the Kishida government's management of price hikes: "[the effects are] unclear...It seems to be an election ploy".<sup>12</sup> Eventually, Nippon Ishin no Kai made strong progress in the chamber, doubling its gains to win 12 seats and outperforming the main opposition party of CDPJ in proportional representation voting.
- 1.12 Before the upper house election, Osaka Mayor Matsui Ichiro who heads Nippon Ishin no Kai had an agenda of expanding the geographical reach of the opposition party and announced his party's intention on 27 March 2022 to become a powerful political force that the ruling LDP "will not be able to afford to ignore us...The reforms that we have implemented should be extended beyond Osaka, which will help achieve a sustainable Japan".<sup>13</sup> This will transition the Party from a regional entity in Osaka prefecture (the main support base of the party) to a national party.
- 1.13 As the second largest opposition party in the Lower House, it has longer-term aspiration of displacing the CDPJ as the main opposition party by capturing more seats in the Upper House and eventually doubling the number of its elected

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Uechi, Kazuki and Tamiyuki Kihara, "Opposition attacks 'Kishida inflation' ahead of Diet election".

<sup>13</sup> Shinya Chifumi and Yuki Kubota, "Nippon Ishin sets goal of holding 21 seats after Upper House poll" dated 28 March 2022 in *The Asahi Shimbun* [downloaded on 28 March 2022], available at <https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/14584102>.

representatives outside Osaka prefecture in nationwide local government elections by spring 2023.<sup>14</sup> In national politics, Nippon Ishin no Kai is getting more media and public attention. For example, in autumn 2021, it was among the first political parties to articulate publicly the political issue of legislators getting full one million yen (US\$8,130) monthly pay even when they worked for only one day out of a month; the Party is also advocating for a debate on whether Japan should co-manage the possession of US nuclear weapons in Japan after Russia's invasion of Ukraine.<sup>15</sup>

1.14 With such media prominence and growing confidence, Nippon Ishin no Kai spearheaded an increasingly autonomous campaign in the Upper House election instead of cooperating with other opposition parties in deploying unified candidates in single-seat constituencies.<sup>16</sup> However, Matsui's planned retirement from politics in spring 2023 may hurt the party's national aspirations because another powerful party member Osaka Governor Yoshimura Hirofumi has not indicated any interest in taking over Mayor Matsui when he steps down from politics.<sup>17</sup>

1.15 The ruling LDP and its coalition partner Komeito obtained a landslide majority in the 10 July House of Councillors election while pro-constitutional amendment four parties (LDP, Komeito, Nippon Ishin no Kai and DPP) secured a two-thirds majority. Annex B shows the breakdown of the electoral results into proportional representation and single district constituencies, and Annex C lists voter support for parties in the Upper House Elections in the past two decades.

1.16 The 2022 election outcome was a booster for the political longevity of Prime Minister Kishida Fumio as it is the second straight landslide electoral victory after the 2021 House of Representatives election. Many expect Kishida's true policy directions to manifest themselves in the next few months as one minister had predicted anonymously in the mass media before the election outcome that "if he

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.



can garner people's trust in the House of Councillors election, the prime minister will show his identity while eyeing the possibility of a long-term administration".<sup>18</sup>

- 1.17 During the 10 July 2022 NHK (Nippon Hoso Kyokai) interview on ways to strengthen the identity of Kishida-era policies henceforth, Kishida emphasised that he "must do what should be done first", such as giving priority to responses to the coronavirus pandemic, the Ukraine crisis and rising prices.<sup>19</sup> To many, he is feeling things out in the aftermath of the upper house victory and in Abe's death.<sup>20</sup>

### **Abe Shinzo's Assassination and the Impact on the Election**

- 2.1 The assassination of Abe Shinzo (the leader of the largest faction in LDP) was perceived to have generated sympathy votes for a strong upper house electoral victory in July 2022 by the LDP. This is not the first time that the LDP had garnered sympathy votes. In 1980, when Prime Minister Masayoshi Ohira suddenly passed away during a lower house election campaign, sympathy votes delivered a strong victory for the LDP.
- 2.2 Many in the mass media opined this upper house electoral victory strengthened the position of Kishida Fumio as the prime minister. This school of thought believed that Abe Shinzo's assassination benefitted the LDP's upper house election by securing a super majority for the ruling party and its conservative allies. The upper house in Japan has half of its seats up for election annually and each term is six years; every three years, half are contested. LDP and the conservatives forces/allies secured two-thirds majority. The conservatives already have two-thirds majority in the lower house.
- 2.3 Simply put, the conservatives' quest for constitutional amendment has secured the two-thirds supermajority in both houses. Such an alignment connotes that the

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<sup>18</sup> *Mainichi Shimbun*, "Japan PM Kishida may struggle to show leadership despite big win after Abe's death" dated 11 July 2022 in *Mainichi Japan* [downloaded on 11 July 2022], available at <https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20220711/p2a/00m/0na/038000c>.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

Kishida administration can theoretically initiate the process for bringing about changes to the post-war constitution, including Article Nine no-war clause (giving the post-war constitution the nickname ‘Peace Constitution’).

- 2.4 This clears the way for a national referendum to decide on the revision of the post-war Constitution and for Japan to become a ‘normal’ state. A normal state generally refers to the clarification of the Self-Defence Forces’ (SDF) legal status, deployment of SDF and concentration of state powers for dealing with emergencies and natural disasters, with subtle nuances amongst the various Japanese political parties in parliament. ‘Normal’ states have the sovereign right to defend themselves if they are under threat. In the United Nations, only two countries are officially listed without armies and they are Japan and Costa Rica.
  
- 2.5 Meanwhile, post-death evaluation of Abe Shinzo came in fast and furious. Many, foes and allies alike, consider him to be one of the most consequential prime ministers in Japanese political history. He was described as a visionary by many of his supporters both within and outside Japan while critics see him as a revisionist. His mark on Japan’s foreign diplomacy was also consequential, perhaps as consequential as Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru’s policy of coming under the United States’ defence and nuclear umbrella to free up resources to concentrate on Japan’s post-war economic recovery (a policy coined by academics and researchers in the 1980s as the ‘Yoshida Doctrine’). Yoshida’s priority was on the revitalisation of the Japanese economy after the defeat of Japan in World War II (WWII).
  
- 2.6 Japan was readmitted to the community of nations after the 1952 San Francisco Treaty and as a downplayed military power. Another highly consequential leader was Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro who had a good relationship with US President Ronald Reagan. Nakasone pushed for internationalisation (*kokusaika* in Japanese) and shifted Japan away from a low posture in global affairs and away from the Yoshida Doctrine. He once described Japan as an ‘unsinkable aircraft carrier’. Abe continued Nakasone’s advocacy for a higher international profile based on its economic strength while reversing Japan’s economic post-bubble recessionary conditions through Abenomics. He contributed to the idea of the Indo-Pacific which placed Southeast Asia at the centre of the concept in line with ASEAN centrality.

- 2.7 Abe also worked hard to improve relations with China after Sino-Japanese relations hit their lowest levels during the years of Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) rule from 2010 to 2013. When news of his death reached the Chinese leadership, Chinese President Xi Jinping expressed great regrets as Abe was acknowledged to have made a strong contribution to Sino-Japanese ties. First Chinese Lady Peng Liyuan also sent her condolences to Abe's wife, Akie.
- 2.8 Abe was tough on North Korea and took up the task of demanding accountability over the abduction (*rachi mondai*) of Japanese by North Korean agents who came up to Japanese shorelines in mini submarines. Taking up this hot button issue let him win the Japanese public who greatly sympathised with the families of the victims.
- 2.9 All these factors stated earlier endeared memories of Abe to the voters and reinforced the idea that his death garnered more sympathy votes for LDP in the upper house election. Abe elevated Japan to the international stage and stabilised his country's economy. His legacy is likely going to be selectively continued by the Kishida administration. After his resignation, Abe became the leader of the LDP's largest political faction (with more than 100 members from both chambers of the Diet<sup>21</sup>) in November 2021, a potential kingmaker and powerful source of influence on the Kishida administration's public policies and human resources affairs. His demise may either give Kishida a stronger hand/autonomy in factional politics or introduce some fluctuations in factional alignments, as speculated by the mass media.
- 2.10 LDP policy chief Sanae Takaichi, an influential voice amongst the conservatives who had past exchanges with Kishida and received personal support from Abe in the 2021 LDP presidential election, articulated her views on 10 July 2022 in an interview with Nippon Cultural Broadcasting Inc. This was perceived as an attempt to remind Kishida of the conservative agenda: "The former prime minister's wish is to amend the Constitution, strengthen national defence and achieve economic

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<sup>21</sup> The Mainichi, "LDP faction to come under collective leadership after Abe's death" dated 20 July 2022 in Mainichi Japan [downloaded on 20 July 2022], available at <https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20220719/p2g/00m/0na/025000c>.

growth that stalled in the middle of the ‘Abenomics’ economic policy mix due to the coronavirus pandemic. I want to protect the light of hope he brought for the conservatives”.<sup>22</sup>

- 2.11 Conservatives like Sanae are keen to ensure that Kishida does not stray from Abe’s goal of constitutional amendment, something that Kishida has maintained on his political agenda thus far. Shimomura Hakubun (acting co-chair of LDP Seiwaken, Abe’s faction) reiterated the same sentiments on a televised programme on 11 July 2022, urging Kishida to pay consideration to Seiwaken in his Cabinet and LDP executives reshuffles after the upper house election victory on 10 July 2022: “The prime minister [Kishida] is a liberal. If he disregards the Seiwa group, the LDP will lose conservative supporters”.<sup>23</sup>
- 2.12 The liberal-leaning and moderate Kishida faction (fourth biggest within the LDP with slightly more than 40 members) will need to reach out to the conservatives (kept under strong Abe leadership and skilful coordination before his sudden death) to strive for party unity. On 17 July 2022, Shionoya Ryu and Shimomura Hakubun (acting chairpersons of Seiwaken) confirm publicly that the faction will remain status quo and not choose Abe’s successor for now and keep it united under the name of “Abe faction”.<sup>24</sup>
- 2.13 Unity is important as Abe’s factional members hold important posts in the Kishida administration and the party, such as Chief Cabinet Secretary Matsuno Hirokazu, Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry Hagiuda Koichi and Chairperson of the party’s General Council Fukuda Tatsuo, to name a few. Before his death on 8 July 2022, Abe mentioned Shimomura Hakubun (acting co-chair of Seiwaken), former Minister for Economic RevitaliSation Nishimura Yasutoshi, Hagiuda and Matsuno as possible future candidates to take over the Seiwaken.<sup>25</sup> On 9 July 2022, When

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<sup>22</sup> *Mainichi Shimbun*, “Japan PM Kishida may struggle to show leadership despite big win after Abe’s death”.

<sup>23</sup> The *Mainichi*, “LDP faction to come under collective leadership after Abe’s death”.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

Abe's body arrived at his Tokyo residence, the media noted that Nishimura sat close to Abe's wife Akie and set off speculations about his ambitions.<sup>26</sup>

- 2.14 Japanese media speculated on seven senior parliamentarians as the co-leaders of the Seiwaken: the aforesaid four plus Shionoya, Takagi Tsuyoshi (chairperson of the LDP Diet Affairs Committee) and Seko Hiroshige (secretary-general of the LDP in the House of Councillors) as the new collective leadership for Seiwaken, as former Prime Minister Mori Yoshiro [a *kohai* (junior) of Abe's father Abe Shintaro] urged unity for the faction at a fundraising event on 17 May 2022.<sup>27</sup>
- 2.15 Perhaps symbolic of the spiritual link between Abe (the longest-serving prime minister in Japan at seven years and eight months in office) and Kishida (the Abe cabinet and historically the longest-serving foreign minister in Japan), Prime Minister Kishida and other party members offered a silent prayer for Abe Shinzo at the LDP headquarters in Tokyo's Chiyoda Ward on 10 July 2022 as a symbolic sign of party unity.
- 2.16 After internally uniting LDP's internal factions, Kishida would have to canvass for support from other political parties for his political agendas in Japan's liberal democratic system. For example, in boosting defence spending to up to 2% or more of Japan's gross domestic product (GDP), the LDP would also need to convince its own pacifist coalition partner Komeito of the merits before working on establishing political consensus with major opposition parties like CDPJ (that prioritises focusing on the substance/contents of Japan's defence strategies rather than merely increasing the size of the budget).<sup>28</sup>

### **“New Capitalism” and Hike in Defence Spending**

- 3.1 It remains unclear if this upper house electoral victory will be a boost to Prime Minister Kishida's “new capitalism”. Kishida may be keen to balance between his

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Kyodo, “Upper house election campaign nears end as Abe's death shocks Japan”.

much-vaunted focus on a “distribution-oriented” manifesto of more egalitarian distribution of wealth after the House of Councillors election victory. However, he needs to do it gingerly to not give any impression of downplaying the conservative agenda previously moderated by Abe’s leadership in order to prevent any criticisms from conservative legislators of veering away from their factional interests.

- 3.2 This includes keeping some aspects of Abenomics intact. Even his own coalition is also keen to continue with Abenomics (defined as a combination of BOJ’s monetary easing and fiscal stimulus). Chief of LDP coalition partner Komeito Yamaguchi Natsuo argued in support of Abenomics during campaigning in Kanagawa prefecture: “Mr. Abe was right in seeking to revive the economy with his ‘Abenomics’... We will continue to move ahead on this path”.<sup>29</sup>
- 3.3 Another item that will make an economic impact on his management of budgeting and allocation of financial resources is defence spending. Kishida may also need to tackle vocal conservative voices for him to promote a hike in defence expenditure of up to 2%. There are also other political voices that prefer a compromise without hitting the full 2% so as to allocate financial resources to other economic priorities like meeting the insatiable welfare demands of a rapidly ageing society (Japan’s 2021 population drop was roughly equivalent to losing the entire population of Macau), growing inflation and cost of living issues.
- 3.4 Kishida would have to pay attention to higher energy and food prices, consumer sentiments and Japan’s incomplete recovery from the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic (the seventh wave centred on the BA5 variant started in mid-July 2022). Despite the government’s supplementary budget and cash handouts, price rises driven by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 persisted with higher food costs impacting families.<sup>30</sup> An *Asahi Shimbun* survey conducted in late May 2022 indicated that 66% of voters did not approve of the Kishida administration’s response to price increases versus 23% that approved.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Uechi, Kazuki and Tamiyuki Kihara, “Opposition attacks ‘Kishida inflation’ ahead of Diet election”.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

## **Results and Their Significance: Pro-constitutional Super Majority in Both Houses?**

- 4.1 With pro-constitutional revision forces having already attained two-thirds supermajority in both houses, th more national elections (in both lower and upper houses) are not needed for Prime Minister Kishida until 2025. In the aftermath of the upper house victory, Kishida remains tight-lipped about his plans for constitutional amendment. After Abe’s sudden death, Kishida emphasised in an interview with Nippon Television Network Corp. that “the unity of the government and the ruling parties is important [expecting Abe’s death to foment new leadership changes]. When considering management of the government in an emergency, I want to value unity above all else”.<sup>32</sup>
- 4.2 Given the disarray and weakness of the opposition parties coupled with the strength of the LDP in the 2022 Upper House Election, some opine there is a political momentum towards Japan becoming a “normal state”, with constitutional revision an increasing likelihood. Perhaps the trigger/catalyst to constitutional revision and a national referendum coming to a head may be the relentless nuclearisation of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK or North Korea), including the restart of nuclear tests, and robust Chinese posture in the East China Sea alongside the China-US rivalry manifested in the Taiwan Strait and South China/East China Seas.
- 4.3 The post-war peace constitution was imposed on Japan after its defeat in WWII. Many in the LDP and the conservatives are keen to revise it to provide a new post-war identity for the Japanese people; however, public opinion demonstrates polarisation as pacifism (especially amongst older generations of Japanese people) remain strong. Such pacifist opinions are constantly challenged by North Korea’s belligerence and relentless nuclear weaponisation/missile programmes. North Korea has demonstrated lethal capabilities in developing atomic bombs, submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), cruise missiles, intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), manoeuvrable Iskandar-like ballistic missiles, rail mobile ballistic missiles, hydrogen bomb, multiple independent re-entry vehicles (MIRVs)

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<sup>32</sup> *Mainichi Shimbun*, “Japan PM Kishida may struggle to show leadership despite big win after Abe’s death”.

and hypersonic missile prototypes. In the past, some of these weaponries were even tested over Hokkaido airspace, spooking the Japanese public and triggering alarm.

- 4.4 The tests and North Korean belligerence were also a threat to South Korea, coupled with joint Sino-Russian nuclear bomber patrols over the median point between South Korean and Japanese airspace. On one occasion in July 2019, South Korean jet fighters fired hundreds of warning shots at Russian Tu-95 nuclear bombers that flew into South Korean Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ) accompanied by two Chinese nuclear bombers. These developments have forged closer ties and coordination between South Korean and Japanese security forces and provided a real sense of threat and crisis for the Japanese people.
- 4.5 Added to this sense of crisis is the Russian invasion of Ukraine, prompting fears that similar events may take place in East Asia. The vastly changed geopolitical situation has brought about some mindset changes in the Japanese people's decision for Japan to be a normal state. Public attitudes towards constitutional revision are slightly below the 50% required for a national referendum to pass. The question is whether Abe's legacy or death could boost and tip public support over the 50% mark in support of a constitutional revision.<sup>33</sup>
- 4.6 The threats posed by North Korea and the changing geopolitical landscape also convinced 71% of South Koreans to yearn for their own nuclear weapons according to the polls conducted by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs in February 2022.<sup>34</sup> Such perceptions of common threats are likely to forge closer ties and trilateral alliance between the United States, South Korea and Japan. The Kishida administration will almost certainly strengthen this trilateral relationship further, particularly since conservative President Yoon Seok-yul, who is widely perceived to be friendlier towards Japan, is in power. A past achievement for Abe is that he

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<sup>33</sup> Smith, Daniel, "What Shinzo Abe's assassination means for Japanese politics" dated 9 July 2022 in *Washington Post* [downloaded on 9 July 2022], available at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/07/09/japan-abe-shooting-political-fallout/>.

<sup>34</sup> Rasheed, Zaheena and Heejin Kang, "Why some South Koreans want their own nuclear bomb" dated 3 June 2022 [downloaded on 3 June 2022], available at <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/6/3/why-south-koreans-want-their-own-nuclear-bomb#:~:text=A%20poll%20by%20the%20US,of%20global%20sanctions%20and%20censure.>

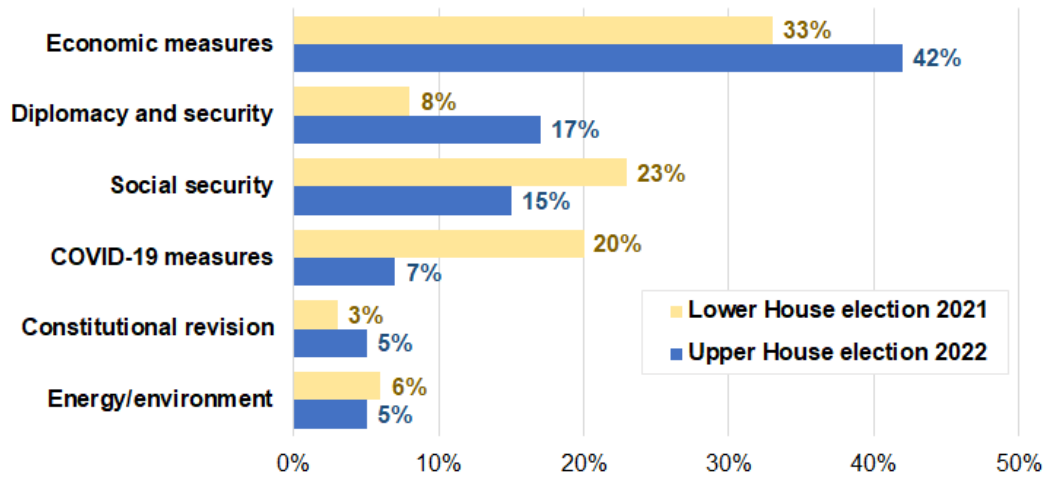


enjoyed positive reception amongst Republicans and Democrats who considered Abe to be a forceful and visionary leader and a close friend of the United States.

- 4.7 Through Abe, the United States felt secure that the two countries have a shared vision of regional security and prosperity through the concept of a free and open Indo-Pacific. Abe had also previously maintained good relations with India (a rising regional power) and Australia (which has its own challenges with China). Together with these powers, the Quad which started as a security dialogue was effectively reinvigorated into an alignment in the days of the Trump administration.
- 4.8 In the economic sphere, when the Trump administration pulled out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), the former Abe administration helped to hold the TPP together with Australia and other members, and rebranded it as the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). The rebrand was so successful that the United Kingdom, China, South Korea and Taiwan have all expressed interest in joining it.
- 4.9 Abe's legacy of strong partnership with the United States and strengthening US-Japanese security relationship means that Kishida will have to demonstrate his diplomatic skills in consulting with the United States for any constitutional revision. Abe's rapport with successive US administrations of George Bush Jr and Donald J Trump has placed Japan in a favourable strategic position in aggregating US interests in the region.
- 4.10 Abe visited the United States in 2007 and charismatically managed his visit to Camp David, to the delight of American political elites. He demonstrated strong political skills when he worked with Donald Trump, probably the most adept amongst G7 leaders in doing so. He prevented the deterioration in bilateral US relations that characterised the relationships seen in other G7 countries during the Trump era.
- 4.11 In managing any constitutional revisions, Kishida will have to demonstrate the same level of skills in pushing forward his agenda of maintaining a strong and stable US-Japan relationship. At the time of Abe's death, US media and political leaders of all stripes showed strong nostalgia and warmth towards the Abe years. When

navigating any constitutional revisions, Kishida would also have to maintain Japan's longstanding relationship as a strong developmental partner of ASEAN. Southeast Asia had in the past benefitted from Japanese capacity-building efforts that solidified Japan's status as the most trusted nation from their perspective. Abe was also skilful in moving ASEAN to the centre of the Indo-Pacific strategy. Thus, Kishida is likely to reassure regional countries of Japan's intentions in constitutional revision issues to ensure continuity of Japanese soft power while maintaining its longstanding relations with ASEAN countries in the area of capacity-building.

### ANNEX A ELECTION ISSUES BY NHK OPINION POLL

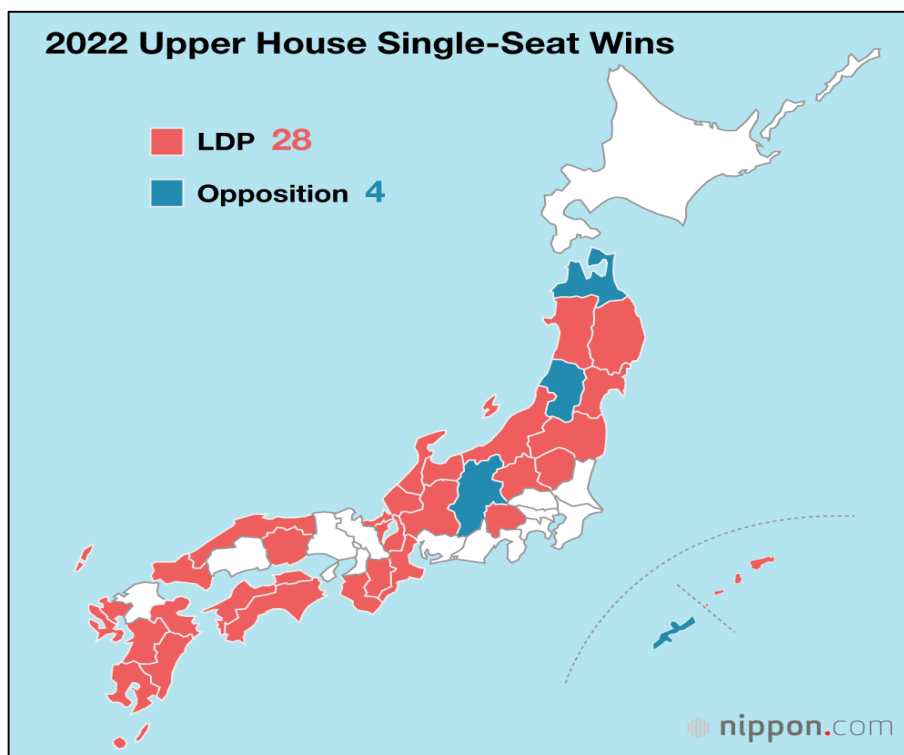


Source: Sano, Kentaro, "Upper House Election 2022: The Key Issues" dated 22 June 2022 [downloaded on 22 June 2022], available at <https://www.japanjournal.jp/diplomacy/politics/pt20220622141521.html>.

## ANNEX B 2022 HOUSE OF COUNCILLORS ELECTION RESULTS

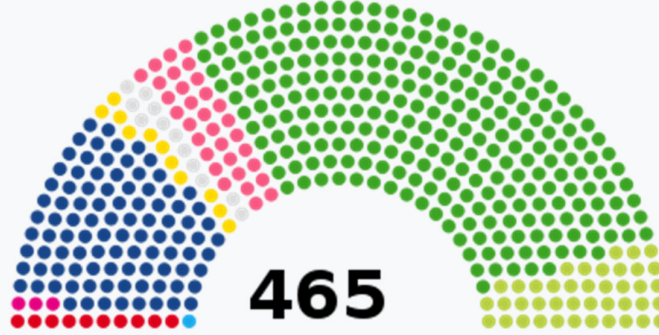
		Seats won	Electoral districts	Proportional representation
Ruling coalition	Liberal Democratic Party	63	45	18
	Kōmeitō	13	7	6
Opposition parties	Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan	17	10	7
	Nippon Ishin no Kai	12	4	8
	Democratic Party for the People	5	2	3
	Japanese Communist Party	4	1	3
	Reiwa Shinsengumi	3	1	2
	Social Democratic Party	1	0	1
	Party to Protect the People from NHK	1	0	1
	Sanseitō	1	0	1
	Independents	5	5	–
<b>Total</b>		<b>125</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>50</b>

Note: Total includes one vacant Kanagawa prefecture seat not officially up for election this year.

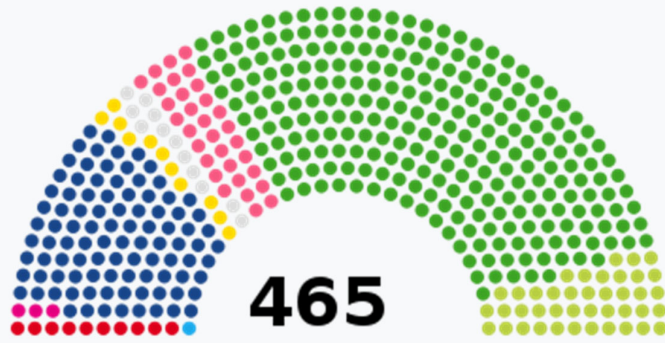


Source: Nippon.com “LDP, Constitutional Revisionists Strong in 2022 Upper House Election Politics” dated 11 July 2022 in Nippon.com [downloaded on 11 July 2022], available at <https://www.nippon.com/en/japan-data/h01380/>.

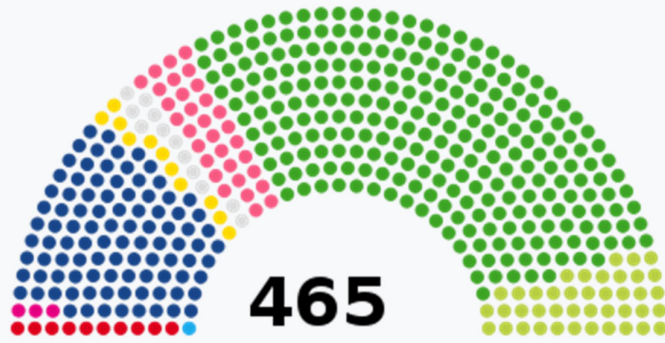
## ELECTION RESULTS FOR UPPER HOUSE ELECTION 2022



Party	Proportional			Constituency			Total seats	+/-
	Votes	%	Seats	Votes	%	Seats		
Liberal Democratic Party	19,914,883	34.66	72	27,626,235	48.08	187	259	-25
Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan	11,492,095	20.00	39	17,215,621	29.96	57	96	New
Nippon Ishin no Kai	8,050,830	14.01	25	4,802,793	8.36	16	41	+30
Komeito	7,114,282	12.38	23	872,931	1.52	9	32	+3
Japanese Communist Party	4,166,076	7.25	9	2,639,631	4.59	1	10	-1
Democratic Party for the People	2,593,396	4.51	5	1,246,812	2.17	6	11	New
Reiwa Shinsengumi	2,215,648	3.86	3	248,280	0.43	0	3	New
Social Democratic Party	1,018,588	1.77	0	313,193	0.55	1	1	-1
NHK Party	796,788	1.39	0	150,542	0.26	0	0	New
Shiji Seitō Nashi	46,142	0.08	0				0	0
Japan First Party	33,661	0.06	0	9,449	0.02	0	0	New



Party	Proportional			Constituency			Total seats	+/-
	Votes	%	Seats	Votes	%	Seats		
Yamato Party	16,970	0.03	0	15,091	0.03	0	0	New
New Party to Strengthen Corona Countermeasures by Change of Government	6,620	0.01	0				0	New
Kunimori Conservative Party				29,306	0.05	0	0	New
Love Earth Party				5,350	0.01	0	0	New
Party for Japanese Kokoro				4,552	0.01	0	0	0
Reform Future Party				3,698	0.01	0	0	New
Renewal Party				2,750	0.00	0	0	New
Party for a Successful Japan				1,630	0.00	0	0	New
Independents				2,269,168	3.95	12	12	-10
<b>Total</b>	<b>57,465,979</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>57,457,032</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>289</b>	<b>465</b>	<b>0</b>
Valid votes	57,465,979	97.58		57,457,032	97.55			

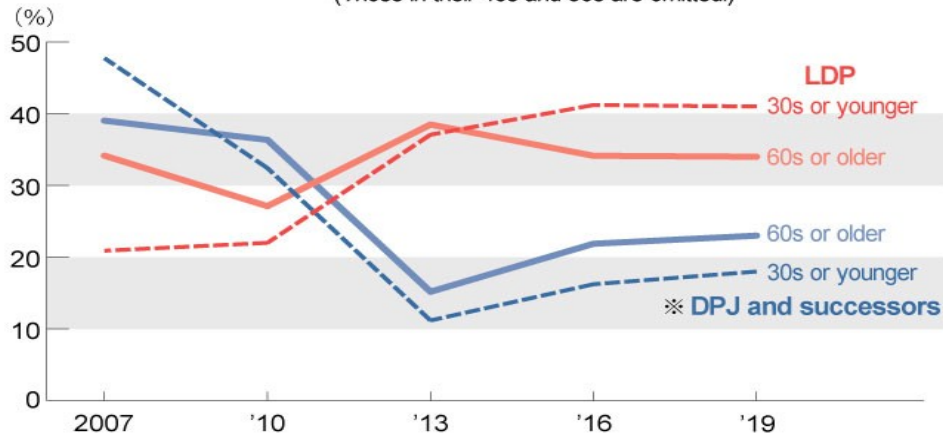


Party	Proportional			Constituency			Total seats	+/-
	Votes	%	Seats	Votes	%	Seats		
Invalid/blank votes	1,425,366	2.42		1,443,227	2.45			
<b>Total votes</b>	<b>58,891,345</b>	<b>100.00</b>		<b>58,900,259</b>	<b>100.00</b>			
Registered voters/turnout	105,224,103	55.97		105,224,103	55.98			
Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications.								

Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, “House of Representatives (Japan) Latest Election Results” dated 12 July 2022 in Wikipedia [downloaded 12 July 2022], available at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/House\\_of\\_Representatives\\_%28Japan%29](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/House_of_Representatives_%28Japan%29).

**ANNEX C RESULTS FOR UPPER HOUSE ELECTIONS IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

**Which parties did people vote for in the proportional representation portion of Upper House elections?**  
(Those in their 40s and 50s are omitted.)



※ Figures of 2016 are those for the Democratic Party. Those this time are for the Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan and the Democratic Party for the People.

Source: *The Asahi Shimbun*, "Support for LDP continues to increase among young voters" dated 21 July 2019 in *The Asahi Shimbun* [downloaded on 21 July 2019], available at <https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/13060755>.

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Best regards,  
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