

Förändringar i det politiska landskapet leder till ny riktning i Japans energipolitik

Denna rapportering ingår som en del i det allmänna bevakningsuppdraget som Tillväxtanalys har i sin instruktion. Formatet täcker aktuella händelser inom policy i bevakningsländerna.

On 16 December, a general election for the House of Representatives (Lower House) took place, booting ruling party the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) out of office. The election brought Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), which ruled for 50 plus years before the DPJ ruling of only three and a half years, back to power. LDP with its coalition partner New Komeito Party now has over a two-third majority of the 480 members in the Lower House.

The election of House of Councillors (Upper House), which LDP/New Komeito does not hold the majority in, will take place during summer 2013. Any drastic changes are not expected to take place until then. However, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and his cabinet members are already making statements to radically alter the energy related policies and strategies indicated by DPJ before the general elections.

Since the disasters in March 2011, energy issue has captured the attention of the broader public and DPJ has paved the pathway towards a re-modeling of the energy system (for details of the background of Japanese energy system and development of changes in the system after March 11, 2011, refer to sections of the Growth Analysis report "Energy Crisis Management of Japan", WP/PM 2012:15).

Some of the issues the DPJ administration decided or had shown signs towards changes were: debundling of the electricity grid, liberalizing all of the electricity market and halting the construction of three of the new nuclear power plants which the construction has already started. One of the major decisions made by the previous government was to halt the use of all nuclear power plants by the end of 2030s.

The new administration, headed by Prime Minister Abe, has already declared all nuclear power plants judged safe according to the new safety standard to be established July 2013 by the newly established Nuclear Regulation Agency will be positively considered for restarting. This is a characteristic of the new administration which prioritizes economic growth, as the rise in electricity price in the result of non-operation of nuclear power plants has become an increasing economic burden for the industries in Japan. The expert committee that had been convened by the previous administration to consider the restructuring of the electricity system, including debundling of the grid system, has not met since November with no signs of reconvening under the new administration. Though LDP has not clearly indicated the mid-, long-term goals for ratio of nuclear

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utilization and has stated to decide on a sustainable energy mix within ten years, a radical detour from the “nuclear-free” path the previous government has attempted to make is inevitable. Additionally, the new Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry has made a statement the 25 per cent reduction target of Greenhouse Gas Emission in 2020, announced by ex-Prime Minister Hatoyama of DPJ, will have to be reviewed as it is an unrealistic target.

Again, concrete and drastic changes may not be seen until end of the Upper House election during the summer 2013, but LDP is showing many signs to decelerate the nuclear phase-out or may even “re”support use of nuclear.