

Resign now, Prime Minister Kan菅首相、貴方は、即刻、首相を辞任すべきです

Asia-Pacific Journal Feature

Between 2012 and 2014 we posted a number of articles on contemporary affairs without giving them volume and issue numbers or dates. Often the date can be determined from internal evidence in the article, but sometimes not. We have decided retrospectively to list all of them as Volume 10, Issue 54 with a date of 2012 with the understanding that all were published between 2012 and 2014.

Japan's Yomiuri Shimbun has published a letter from Nishioka Takeo, the House of Concillors President and an important member of Kan's own Democratic Party calling for Prime Minister Kan's resignation.

The original link in [English](#) and a reproduction of the original in [Japanese](#) (not available in full on the Yomiuri website).

Nishioka has consistently criticized Kan since early April. In an April 7 [press conference](#) he said "The Kan Cabinet cannot be allowed to run the country at a time like this. As the President of the House of Councilors, I just cannot remain silent." The Tokyo Shimbun also [reports](#) continued tension between Nishioka and Kan, with the former deciding to go to the press after his request for a personal meeting was declined.

While Nishioka's concern over issues such as the provision of accurate information on Fukushima in a timely manner are no doubt genuine, personal friction between the pair also seems to have influenced the decision to go public. Another major factor is the Democratic Party's internal politics. Kan has long been opposed by a faction of the party led by Ozawa Ichiro, who has stepped out of the public spotlight due to corruption allegations. The Tokyo Shimbun [reports](#) that Ozawa's supporters in the party, ready to topple Kan and claim the top job for one of their number, are echoing Nishioka's criticisms. On May 19th, 20 Diet members close to Ozawa held a "study group" on reconstruction with Nishioka as an invited lecturer. He is [reported](#) to have said "I believe from the bottom of my heart that things won't work out if Kan is in charge." Meanwhile, Kan allies such as Minister of Finance Noda Yoshihiko have criticized Nishioka as lacking impartiality.

Much of the current debate focuses on Kan's ability to present a coherent explanation of Japan's response to the crisis thus far and a plan for reconstruction to world leaders at the upcoming G8 summit in France on the 26th and 27th of May. Nishioka's comments, however, while raising some important points, seem to lack strong alternatives, and the resignation of yet another Japanese leader seems unlikely to impress other heads of state. As Kan heads to France, Nishioka's comments have sparked debate domestically, but like many critiques of

Kan's response to 3.11 to date, they provide little in the way of specific solutions to Japan's troubled leadership.

The following is a translation of an open letter contributed to The Yomiuri Shimbun by House of Councillors President Takeo Nishioka, demanding the immediate resignation of Prime Minister Naoto Kan. Nishioka made his demand as one of the two heads of the legislative branch of government to Kan, the head of the administrative branch. It is extremely rare for such an action to cross the boundaries of the three supreme powers of the nation, the other being the judicial branch.

To Prime Minister Naoto Kan:

I am sure the weight of the world is on your shoulders, with duties that require your attention day and night. I thank you for your hard work.

As a representative of one of the supreme organizations in the nation's three independent branches of authority, I would like to venture to express my candid opinion in this open letter. Prime Minister Kan, you should immediately resign from your post.

I think many people share my present thoughts about you: among them survivors of the Great East Japan Earthquake, residents forced to evacuate their homes due to the crisis at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant, members of the general public and Diet members from both opposition and ruling

parties.

I also believe that heads of local governments and assembly members distrust and are concerned about you.

There is a reason why, despite this situation, hardly any voices have called, "Prime Minister Kan, you should resign." It is generally believed it would be unthinkable to change the supreme leader of the nation at a time when serious problems are occurring that are not limited to national politics, and when measures are under way to deal with the situation.

However, you have continued to abandon your duties as prime minister since the March 11 disaster took place.

This is in itself unthinkable.

Given that you also abandoned your duties as prime minister last year, when a Chinese fishing boat collided with Japan Coast Guard ships off the Senkaku Islands in Okinawa Prefecture, I believe you are not aware of your duties as prime minister concerning state affairs.

There is a Japanese saying that may be used to refute my anger: Don't change horses in the middle of a rapidly flowing stream.

I agree with this saying, but only when the horse is bravely grappling with the violent current. You, Prime Minister Kan, have neither the passion, determination nor skill to lead the

nation. I believe there is more danger in maintaining the status quo than in changing our horse in a rapid current.

If you do not resign now, it will be impossible to solve the problems of survivors of the Great East Japan Earthquake, as well as the serious problems brought about by the nuclear crisis. At this moment, the plant continues to discharge radioactive substances into the air and ground, and contaminated water is being released into the sea.

I would now like to touch upon points I have been wondering about since March 11--why you did not do certain things or had no inclination to do so.

First, why did you not compile an emergency situation bill and pass it into law immediately after March 11?

You launched various councils and headquarters after the disaster, which ended up confusing the chain of command--a measure to make your responsibility ambiguous and delay decisions.

In restoration efforts after the great quake, considerable burdens and trouble were shouldered by heads of prefectural and municipal governments, their employees, local fire brigades, fire stations, police officers, the Tokyo Fire Department, local welfare commissioners and members of the Self-Defense Forces.

I cannot overlook the fact that you did not hold a meeting of the Security Council of Japan before issuing an order to the Defense Ministry to mobilize 100,000 SDF members. In addition to national defense matters, the Security Council of Japan exists to discuss important matters regarding the handling of serious emergency situations. You ignored the law.

Second, the nuclear plant crisis is a great concern for the international community. You made a serious error when you declined an offer of assistance from U.S. forces in the early stages of the crisis.

Also, you have no vision of how to end the crisis even now.

Third, you must urgently provide people hit by the disaster with any type of housing, instead of promising to provide them with temporary housing units by "early August."

The government should provide all possible housing for people affected by the disaster, letting them move from shelters to temporary housing units, vacant units of publicly run apartments and private rental units.

Another urgent task for the government is to secure the funding for such measures and improve medical services for disaster victims.

Fourth, it is the prime minister's duty to deal with the debris created by the disaster. Sorting and disposing of the debris is more difficult than predicted, and it is also an urgent task in

the run-up to the rainy season.

You should have presented clear directions and deadlines for various measures, such as new national land planning; urban planning; reconstruction of agriculture, forestry and fisheries; blueprints for helping small and midsize companies rehabilitate themselves; and creation of new educational programs.

Fifth, you should have provided accurate, true information not just to people who have been forced to evacuate from their homes but also people across the country, who have been fearfully watching the development of the nuclear plant crisis.

The nuclear reactors, as experts predicted, went into meltdown. I suspect both Tokyo Electric Power Co. and you already knew it had happened.

Sixth, your political approach is to try to postpone everything. Even in this national crisis, you did not set deadlines on most of the aforementioned tasks.

Faced with growing criticism, you hurriedly announced a new timetable on May 17, but funding for it has not been secured.

Revenue sources for measures to tackle disaster damage, the cost of dealing with the nuclear plant crisis and the government's new electricity policy all remain uncertain.

If they are too difficult for you to handle, you should voluntarily step down.

Under the current situation, you will have no defense against accusations that your actions are measures to stay in the post of prime minister. This is like washing your own wounds with other people's blood.

Our nation is facing many difficult tasks, including diplomatic problems and domestic issues such as public pension schemes.

I do not believe you have the ability to deal with these tasks. Before it becomes too late for everything, I again strongly insist you step down as quickly as possible.

Even if opposition parties pass a censure motion in a majority vote in the House of Councillors, you may continue in the post. If you don't voluntarily resign, the only alternative for opposition parties is to submit a no-confidence motion against the Cabinet to the House of Representatives before the Group of Eight summit meeting to be held on May 26 and 27.

I now feel deep regret about my help in creating the Kan Cabinet, looking back on my long experience as a politician.

I am asking myself: Can I look straight into the clear eyes of infants, who do not understand they have left their hometowns because of radiation, and of children forced to study in other places than their own schools?

All Diet members, regardless of their parties or groups, must dedicate their lives to ensuring that the March 11 disaster and the nuclear

crisis will not cast dark shadows on the future of our children at least.

(May. 24, 2011)