

# New far-right prime minister installed in Japan

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On Tuesday, Japan's parliament installed Sanae Takaichi, the new leader of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), as prime minister. The elevation to power of this ultra-nationalist, pro-war figure comes with a new ruling coalition that is rapidly pushing establishment politics even further to the right.

The LDP and the right-wing nationalist Nippon Ishin no Kai agreed to form a government following the exit from the ruling coalition of long-time LDP junior partner Komeito on October 10. The two parties finalized their agreement on Monday after Ishin had also held possible coalition talks with the main opposition Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan (CDP) and the Democratic Party for the People.

Takaichi became prime minister with 237 votes in the lower house of the National Diet, which included the LDP's 196 seats, Ishin's 35 seats and a handful of other votes. She defeated her next closest opponent, Yoshihiko Noda, leader of the CDP, who received just 149 votes. Despite the totals, the new ruling bloc will lead a minority government, two seats shy of a majority.

Takaichi replaces Shigeru Ishiba who resigned in September following disastrous showings for the LDP in the October 2024 general election and the July upper house election, in which the LDP lost its majorities in both houses of parliament.

The establishment media both in Japan and abroad have hailed the fact that Takaichi is the first woman to become the country's prime minister, claiming there is a progressive quality to her administration. This serves to distract from Takaichi's far-right-wing record as well as the upcoming attacks on the working class that are being prepared.

Furthermore, Takaichi's elevation to power was a highly anti-democratic process. The broad population

had no say in her election as LDP president nor in electing her to be prime minister. She was selected by the highest levels of the state as the bourgeois parties hashed out behind the scenes who would become prime minister.

Takaichi represents the far right of what is already a right-wing party. She is a prominent member of the ultra-nationalist organization Nippon Kaigi. The group promotes historical revisionism and remilitarization and calls for so-called "patriotic" education, or in other words, education that whitewashes and minimizes the war crimes of Japanese imperialism in the 20th century. It also advocates abolishing democratic rights for the working class while opposing gender equality for women.

Takaichi has also made regular visits to the Yasukuni war shrine, including this past August 15, the anniversary of the end of World War II in the Pacific. Yasukuni is closely connected with Japanese militarism. Just like Nippon Kaigi, the shrine promotes a revisionist history of Japanese imperialism and its crimes. Fourteen class-A war criminals from World War II are enshrined at Yasukuni. The last sitting prime minister to visit the shrine was Shinzo Abe in December 2013.

Takaichi was politically close to Abe. She served in numerous cabinet positions in Abe's first stint in office from 2006 to 2007, as well as during his longer period in power from 2012 to 2020. During Abe's time in office, he pushed through constitutional "reinterpretations" and military legislation to allow Japan to wage war overseas, in violation of Article 9 of the constitution.

Takaichi's last cabinet position was as minister of state for economic security under Fumio Kishida, who pledged to double military spending to 2 percent of

GDP by 2027. Kishida also further aligned Japan with the United States and South Korea in a de facto trilateral military alliance in preparation for launching war against China.

Takaichi is not planning to simply continue the agenda of her predecessors, but in alliance with Ishin has already pledged to rapidly accelerate war planning and remilitarization in line with the demands of the Japanese ruling class and the Trump administration in Washington.

Ishin, for all of its talk of pursuing “reforms” or opposing “corruption” in the past, has always shared the LDP’s goal of remilitarization and constitutional revision in order to wage war and attack democratic rights. In line with this, Ishin’s proposed populist measures will quickly be jettisoned as well.

Hirofumi Yoshimura, the head of Ishin, stated on Monday that the LDP and his party “share the same national vision and the desire to strengthen Japan. As a reformist party, we want to push forward the reforms we’ve advocated so far.”

These “reforms,” contained in the inter-party agreement signed Monday, include the early revision of three core military documents that were announced in December 2022 as part of Japan’s remilitarization program: the National Security Strategy, National Defense Strategy and Defense Buildup Program. These programs were originally slated to run for approximately ten years. They also included the plan to double military spending.

However, as the US pushes for war with China, Tokyo’s plans are increasingly seen as insufficient both in Washington and in Tokyo. Trump has demanded allies in the Asia-Pacific like Japan and South Korea increase their military spending to as much as 5 percent of GDP.

New Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi stated in regards to military spending, “It’s not about the amount or the ratio to GDP. What matters is the substance of our defense capabilities.” In other words, the Japanese ruling class is dispensing even further with any limitations on its military spending after decades of maintaining a military budget of approximately 1 percent of GDP. Such limits reflected fears in the ruling class about the broad anti-war sentiment of the working class.

Takaichi has now strongly hinted that her

administration will hike military spending soon, though she has not publicly given an exact figure. This will no doubt be under discussion when Trump visits Japan from October 27 to 29. Increased military spending will undoubtedly mean cutbacks to essential social services including education, health and welfare programs.

Should the increased budget be pushed through, Tokyo intends to continue developing and deploying long-range missiles. The Defense Ministry already announced at the end of August that it plans to deploy upgraded Type-12 missiles for the first time to the city of Kumamoto in March. With a range of 1,000 kilometers, this would put China’s east coast and most of North Korea in the crosshairs.

Tokyo also intends to develop submarines capable of vertical missile launches as well as subs with “next-generation propulsion systems,” which is widely considered a reference to nuclear-powered vessels. Other revisions under discussion include removing the remaining restrictions on exporting military equipment overseas and building up Japan’s military industrial base.

To carry out this further remilitarization, the LDP/Ishin coalition intends to revise Article 9 of the constitution, in particular by deleting its second paragraph, stating that “land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.”

That these plans are being promoted so openly now is not because anti-war sentiment in the working class has disappeared. This agenda can only be imposed through a broad attack on democratic rights, which is also under discussion in the name of constitutional revision. Takaichi’s government, therefore, marks a significant turning point in the ruling class’s plans to reassert Japan’s imperialist interests militarily at the expense of workers both domestically and internationally.



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