

# Japan's new far-right PM threatens war with China over Taiwan

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In the month since coming to office, Japan's far-right-wing Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi has sharply escalated tensions with China, particularly over the issue of Taiwan. Recent comments by the prime minister openly demonstrate that Tokyo is preparing for war against China.

On November 7, while speaking to the National Diet's lower house budget committee, Takaichi discussed a situation in which Japan's military, formally known as the Self-Defense Forces (SDF), could be dispatched against China. If Beijing were to impose a military blockade around Taiwan, she said, "No matter how you think about it, it could constitute a survival-threatening situation [for Japan]."

She stated, "Simply lining up civilian ships to make passage difficult would not be a survival-threatening situation. If it is a wartime blockade, with drones flying and various other developments, then the situation could be seen differently." She also added that an attack on US warships attempting to break a blockade could also justify dispatching the SDF.

The carefully-chosen phrase, "survival-threatening situation," is a legal term bound up with Japan's remilitarization. Japan is barred from waging war overseas by Article 9 of its constitution, informally known as the pacifist clause. In 2015, the government of then-Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, from whom Takaichi draws her political inspiration, rammed military legislation through parliament despite mass anti-war protests. It allows Japan to go to war so long as these deployments can be justified as "collective self-defense" in a so-called "survival-threatening situation."

According to its latest Defense Ministry White Paper, Tokyo defines a "survival-threatening situation" as one "where an armed attack against a foreign country that is in a close relationship with Japan occurs, which as a

result, threatens Japan's survival and poses a clear danger of fundamentally overturning Japanese people's right to life, liberty and pursuit of happiness."

This deliberately vague definition could be used to justify any number of military actions and there is nothing defensive about Tokyo's position. Takaichi is the first sitting Japanese prime minister to explicitly state that Japan would go to war with China over Taiwan. In doing so, she is building on the positions of her predecessors, who, while speaking more vaguely, claimed that a conflict over the island would threaten Japan's economic interests and be a danger to its islands in the East China Sea. Japan's Yonaguni Island is just 110 kilometers east of Taiwan.

Takaichi last week refused to retract her remarks, stating that they represent the government's longstanding policy. In November 2023, for example, retired Lieutenant General Koichiro Bansho revealed in an interview with *Nikkei Asia* that Japan was planning to funnel weapons and supplies into Taiwan in the event of a war. Bansho is the former commander of Japan's Western Army, responsible for overseeing military operations in Okinawa Prefecture adjacent to the Chinese mainland.

Takaichi's provocative statement was designed to call the "One China" policy into question. In alliance with successive US administrations, Tokyo has worked to undermine this longstanding policy, which states that Taiwan is a part of China and to which Tokyo and Washington formally adhere. China has made clear that the status of Taiwan is its most significant redline and has stated that any declaration of independence by Taiwan would result in war.

Beijing fears that if Taiwan declared independence, it would set a precedent for a further carve-up of Chinese territory, recalling the division and subjugation of

China by the imperialist powers in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Taiwan would also quickly become a US military base posing a threat to mainland China along with existing bases in Japan and South Korea, which are home to approximately 80,000 US troops in total.

US imperialism regards China's economic rise as the chief threat to its global domination and is prepared to resort to any means, including military, to subordinate it to US interests. Japanese imperialism, which has slipped from the world's second largest economy to fourth, is likewise determined to prevent its eclipse by China. The two allies are deliberately undermining the "One China" policy as a means of goading China into military action against Taiwan, in a similar manner to how the US and NATO provoked Russia into war in Ukraine.

Tokyo is also planning to increase military spending beyond the 2 percent of GDP announced in 2022 and accelerate its remilitarization. No doubt Takaichi and US President Donald Trump discussed how to further this war drive against China during their first summit on October 28. Alongside Trump, Takaichi declared in a speech aboard the USS *George Washington* aircraft carrier, "Japan is ready to contribute even more proactively to the peace and stability of the region."

Contributing to "peace and stability" for Japanese imperialism means preparing for war. Tokyo plans to continue acquiring long-range missiles and is examining the acquisition of nuclear-powered submarines, which in addition to their military advantages raises the issue of nuclear proliferation as the submarines run on highly-enriched uranium. Tokyo also plans to scrap restrictions on the export of lethal weaponry.

Beijing's relations with Tokyo quickly deteriorated last week. China's Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian last Monday criticized Takaichi for "seriously damaging bilateral ties and challenging the post-war international order" while conducting "blatant interference in China's internal affairs." The *People's Daily*, the Chinese Communist Party's official newspaper, published a commentary on Thursday, stating, "The Taiwan question is the core of China's core interests."

The foreign ministries of both countries lodged protests with the other's ambassador, including after

comments made on social media by China's Consul-General Xue Jian in Osaka. In response to Takaichi, he stated that if a "filthy neck sticks itself in uninvited, we will cut it off without a moment's hesitation." Beijing has urged Chinese nationals not to travel to Japan and warned those living there to take safety precautions.

A war over Taiwan would not take place in a vacuum. The US is already conducting a war against Russia in Ukraine while also backing Israel's barbaric genocide of the Palestinian people, and using it to justify bombing Iran in June. Trump is now on the verge of launching another illegal war against Venezuela, having amassed an armada off the South American coast. Amid all of this, Trump is seeking to undermine China by carrying out an economic war against it. The outbreak of hostilities in the Indo-Pacific would mean a major new front in what is rapidly evolving into a world war.



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