

US attack on Venezuela exposes Japan's remilitarization agenda

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The criminal attack on Venezuela and the kidnapping of its president, Nicolás Maduro, by US imperialism at the beginning of the new year has thoroughly exposed all the phony claims that Washington defends "international law." In doing so, this attack has also undermined the fraudulent rationale for war preparations and remilitarization in Japan.

For the past decade and a half, Tokyo has drastically ramped up its remilitarization alongside Washington, claiming that the two were standing up for the "rule of law" in the Indo-Pacific region. The Japanese political establishment falsely claimed that Tokyo needed to rearm in order to "defend" allies, above all against so-called Chinese "aggression."

Tokyo is reliant on its alliance with Washington and this phony "defense" narrative to justify its militarist agenda and to circumvent the Japanese constitution which, in Article 9, explicitly bars Japan from maintaining a military or waging war overseas.

At her first press conference of the year on January 5, far-right-wing Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi backed the attack on Venezuela by avoiding any clear public assessment of Washington's actions.

She declared, "While cooperating closely with the relevant nations, we will proceed with diplomatic efforts to stabilize the situation and restore democracy to Venezuela." This echoed remarks she made the previous day on social media, in which Takaichi also claimed that "Our country has traditionally respected fundamental values and principles such as freedom, democracy, and the rule of law."

Tokyo's position therefore is that working with Washington will result in "democracy" in Venezuela and that US imperialism can be relied upon to uphold the "rule of law." At the same time, the Takaichi government's response shows the nervousness within the political establishment and sections of the financial and

industrial ruling class that Washington's actions cut across Japan's own imperialist interests and exposes the true nature of its remilitarization agenda.

The Trump regime in Washington has thrown out even the pretense that US imperialism stands up for the "rule of law" anywhere in the world. This was summed up by fascist White House Deputy Chief of Staff Stephen Miller who stated in a January 5 interview with CNN, "We live in a world that is governed by strength, that is governed by force, that is governed by power. These are the iron laws of the world that have existed since the beginning of time."

Washington has declared that it will "run" Venezuela with the attack aimed at securing access to the latter's vast oil supply while, in the words of US officials, forcing Caracas to "kick out China, Russia, Iran, and Cuba and sever economic ties." Trump has also proposed attacking other nations and territories, again threatening on Friday to seize Greenland "whether they like it or not."

Tokyo does not stand for the "rule of law" any more than Washington, but regurgitates this phrase to cover up its true agenda: the reemergence of Japanese imperialism as a military power, able to project its strength throughout the Indo-Pacific region in an attempt to offset the crisis of capitalism that it faces.

Japanese imperialism is working to secure supply chains to meet its industrial needs as well as export markets overseas. Like other imperialist powers, it also hopes to exploit the Chinese working class as an even cheaper labor platform than that currently offered by the Stalinist bureaucracy in Beijing.

To carry out this agenda and to confuse anti-war sentiment, which is widespread in Japan, Tokyo regularly accuses China of trying to change the "status quo" in the region through force. Yet the actions of the Trump regime are precisely those that Tokyo attributes to Beijing in regard to Taiwan and disputed territories in the East and

South China Seas.

Itsunori Onodera, head of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party's (LDP) Research Commission on Security, stated on January 4 that "the US administration's invasion of Venezuela is a 'change of the status quo by force' itself, and it contradicts the grounds for denouncing China and Russia." In other words, Washington's actions directly contradict Tokyo's rationale for remilitarization and war while undermining Tokyo's own imperialist ambitions in the Indo-Pacific and beyond.

Other LDP members have demonstrated this nervousness as well. A meeting of party officials and lawmakers on Friday largely backed Takaichi's public handling of the situation, but at least one lawmaker, according to *Nikkei Asia*, reportedly asked, "Why aren't we saying that the US is violating international law?"

Since Trump took office a year ago, tensions between the US and Japan have grown, particularly over trade and the tariffs Washington imposed on Japanese exports to the US. Sections of the ruling elite are chafing at the economic demands placed on Japanese big business. As former senior trade official Masahiko Hosokawa stated last September, "It's a mistake to think that America will just ask for something and Japan will just give it. Japan did not become America's ATM."

The comments by officials like Onodera therefore reflect the potential for conflict between the two imperialist powers.

At the same time, Tokyo is no doubt concerned what effect the attack on Venezuela will have in Japan. Successive governments have used the so-called "China threat" or "North Korea threat" to paint imperialist Japan as a victim to justify the increasing militarization of the region in line with the US and other allies like South Korea, spending trillions of yen for war even as prices for the working class increase while wages remain stagnant or falling.

In 2014, the government of Shinzo Abe, Takaichi's political mentor, pushed through a so-called "reinterpretation" of the constitution to allow Japan to participate in collective self defense; that is, to wage war overseas so long as it is done in conjunction with an ally. This was codified through military legislation the following year, rammed through parliament in the face of massive public opposition and protests.

Under Abe and his successors, including Takaichi, military spending has climbed to record highs year after year, including 9.04 trillion yen (\$US57.5 billion) for fiscal year 2026, which will likely increase through

additional supplementary budgets. A supplementary military budget last year increased total military spending for fiscal 2025 to 11 trillion yen (\$US69.9 billion), reaching two percent of GDP for the first time, a year earlier than previously planned due to US pressure to step up war spending.

In addition, alongside Washington, Tokyo has steadily challenged the One China policy over Taiwan, including by regularly exchanging high level delegations with Taipei, and provocatively dispatching Maritime Self Defense Force (Japan's navy) vessels through the Taiwan Strait in the name of "freedom of navigation," which Japan did for the first time in September 2024.

Two months ago, Takaichi declared in parliament that Japan was prepared to go to war with China over Taiwan if Beijing imposed a military blockade around Taiwan, which she claimed would constitute a "survival-threatening situation," or the legal justification for military action. This means that were Beijing to carry out actions far less provocative in Taiwan than what Washington has done in Venezuela—blockading the country, murdering fishermen off the coast, attacking and abducting a sitting president—Tokyo would use it as the pretext to drag the Japanese working class into war.

The attack on Venezuela is not some aberration or sudden departure from previous foreign policy for US imperialism. It is the continuation and escalation of a decades-long record of wars of aggression, from Iraq and Afghanistan to Libya and Syria. The Biden administration's full-throated support for Israel's genocide against the Palestinians in Gaza and the US-instigated war against Russia in Ukraine demonstrate the real barbaric nature of the US agenda. All of these wars have been backed by Tokyo in the vicious pursuit of its own imperialist agenda.



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