

Ruling right-wing party in Japan wins general election in landslide

Ben McGrath
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Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) secured victory in Sunday's general election, winning more than two-thirds of the seats in the lower house of parliament and ensuring that far-right Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi stays in power. The election results are part of a major shift even further to the right for the Japanese establishment, which is planning for war abroad and the suppression of opposition at home.

The ruling coalition comprised of the LDP and the rightwing, nationalist Nippon Ishin no Kai, secured 352 seats out of all 465 that were up for election. The LDP took 316 seats, up from the 198 it previously held, while Ishin took 36, an increase of two.

The so-called opposition, comprised of several disparate parties, all but collapsed, taking only 113 seats in all. The newly formed Centrist Reform Alliance (CRA) won just 49 seats, a significant drop from the 167 it previously held. The CRA is comprised of the Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan and Komeito—the LDP's former coalition partner of 26 years before breaking away last year over Takaichi's appointment as prime minister.

The opposition also includes parties like the fascistic Sanseito, the Democratic Party for the People (DPP), and "independents," all of whom support many of the policies of the Takaichi cabinet. Sanseito increased its seats from 2 to 15. The DPP gained one seat, increasing its total to 28.

The LDP's victory comes after two disastrous elections in which the party lost its lower house majority in October 2024 and then its upper house majority in July of last year. It has now rebounded, with Takaichi using the election results to claim a mandate for constitutional revision in order to wage war overseas and to strengthen the military, formally known as the Self-Defense Forces (SDF).

Constitutional change requires approval by two-thirds of both houses of parliament and acceptance by a simple

majority in a national referendum and has never succeeded in the post-World War 2 period.

Takaichi stated Sunday night, "We (the LDP) have advocated policies facing significant opposition, including a major shift in economic and fiscal policy, strengthening our security policy, and enhancing intelligence capabilities. If we receive the people's trust, we must work diligently on these matters."

Yet voter turnout is estimated to have reached only 55.68 percent, making it the fourth lowest rate in the post-war period. Since 2012, when Shinzo Abe became prime minister, voter turnout has been at historic lows in each general election, reflecting widespread disillusionment with the political establishment, rather than "mandates" from the public.

The shift in the LDP's fortunes is not the result of widespread support, but the complete lack of an alternative. The political establishment and media have carried out a campaign to repackage the LDP through the figure of Takaichi, portraying her as a "straight-talker," even to some extent as an anti-establishment figure, capable of "getting things done." They have also highlighted the fact that she is Japan's first female prime minister, bringing a sense of change to the role.

As such, Takaichi and the LDP were able to exploit deepening social inequality and economic stress. Workers are suffering from falling real wages. So-called "historic" pay increases last spring have done nothing to keep pace with rising inflation. In 2023, real wages dropped 2.2 percent and dropped another 0.5 percent in 2024. Wages continued to fall each month last year, including a 2.8 percent drop over the previous year in November. The International Monetary Fund predicts that Japan's economy will slow from an already very low 1.1 percent in 2025 to 0.7 percent this year.

Takaichi's cabinet, which took power in October, has sought to win support by putting forward populist

measures, including pledging to suspend the highly unpopular 8 percent consumption tax on food and beverage items for two years amid record-high prices on staples like rice. At the same time, it has sought to distract attention from these issues by sharpening tensions with China and demonizing foreigners in Japan.

Takaichi's agenda follows that of her predecessors, in particular her political mentor Shinzo Abe, who carried out significant attacks on the working class while pursuing remilitarization as prime minister from 2012 to 2020. Quite telling about her agenda, Takaichi also received the endorsement of fascistic US President Trump last Thursday.

The so-called opposition Democrats have consistently bowed before the far-right in Japan. Ahead of this election, they accepted many of the LDP's policies so as to form its alliance with Komeito, including openly backing military legislation rammed through parliament in 2015 that allows Tokyo to wage war overseas alongside an ally.

The CRA did not put forward any serious measures to address the economic crisis that the working people face. Nor did it pledge to oppose remilitarization, but instead declared that it will hold "responsible" discussions on issues like constitutional revision to make it easier for Japan to wage war.

Faced with the crisis of capitalism at home and internationally, Japanese imperialism is seeking to independently reassert its interests through all means. This includes removing any remaining post-war constraints on Japanese militarism, most notably Article 9 of the constitution which formally bans Tokyo from maintaining a military or waging war overseas. In practice, Article 9 has been effectively ignored by successive governments through the establishment of a Japanese military cloaked as Self-Defense Forces and maintaining huge US military bases within Japan.

"Why can't we specify the Self-Defense Forces in the Constitution?" Takaichi stated on February 2, claiming it was necessary to make the SDF an "effective organization." Such a change would be aimed at rendering Article 9 a complete dead letter, or simply eliminating it altogether.

At the same time, the ruling class seeks the passage of anti-democratic and pro-military measures because they foresee working class opposition. This includes passing new legislation such as an anti-espionage law.

The purpose of such a law would be to clamp down on information spreading to the public by expanding what

would constitute a "national secret." Such a law could easily be used to target whistleblowers, journalists, or anyone seeking to expose the ruling class's attack on workers or plans for war.

The LDP, its coalition partner Nippon Ishin no Kai, and opposition parties like the DPP all support constitutional revision. While Article 9 gets much of the attention, the LDP is also proposing a "state of emergency" amendment.

This was first set out as part of the LDP's 2012 draft proposal on revising the constitution. It states that the prime minister would be able to declare an emergency in the event of foreign invasion or so-called "domestic rebellion." Proposed changes to Article 9 would allow the military to be deployed on the streets of Japan to "maintain public order." This is not the language of "defense" but preparation for war against the working class.

Ishin has similarly called for these revisions as well as an early national referendum. Ishin is in fact more hawkish than the LDP in general. "We are committed to taking on the role of the administration's accelerator," Ishin co-leader Fumitake Fujita said on January 21.?

Takaichi's cabinet also plans to revise Japan's National Security Strategy, the National Defense Strategy, and the Defense Buildup Program by the end of this year. These three documents were last revised in 2022 and were intended to cover a 10-year period. A key component of the documents was the raising of military spending to 2 percent of GDP by 2027.

The government reached this 2 percent level early through a supplementary budget at the end of last year. The revision of the three military documents will almost certainly include an even higher spending threshold, the cost of which will have to be extracted from the working class.



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