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INSIGHT

Japan's Landslide Election: Implications for the United States

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Introduction

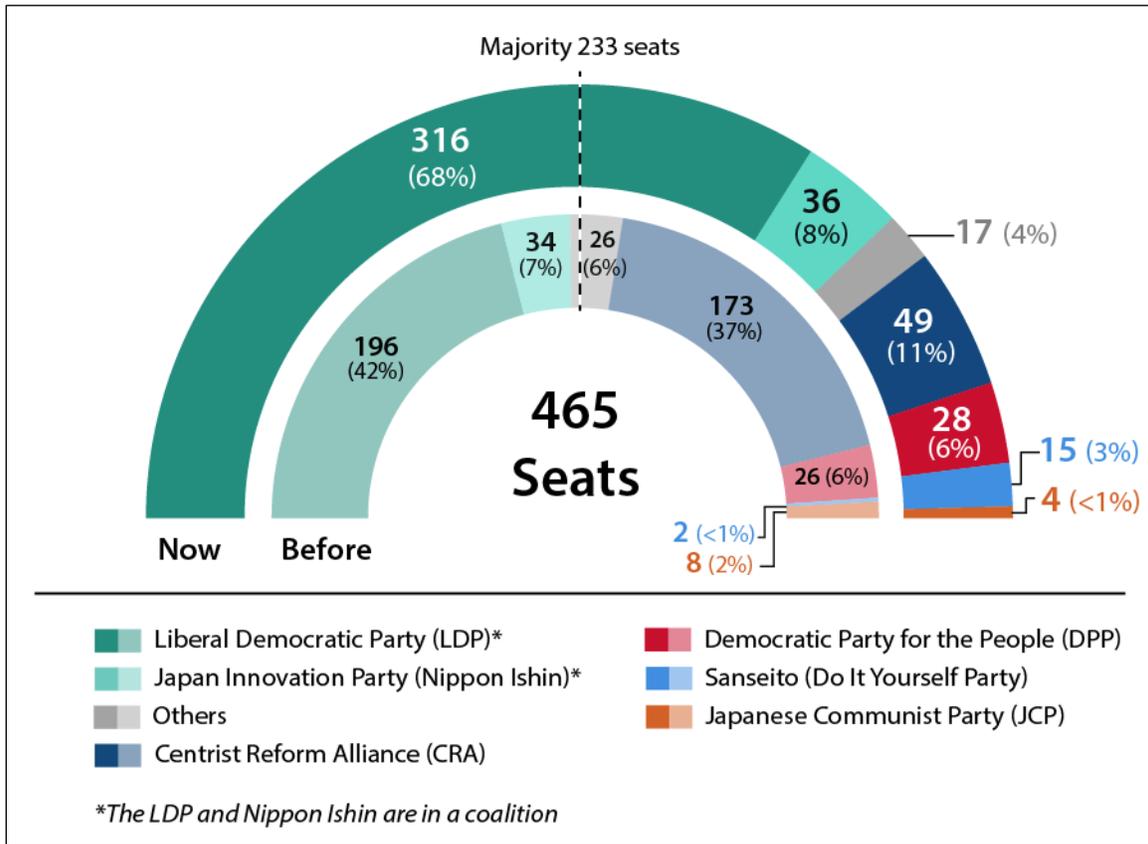
On February 8, 2026, Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi and her ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) won a [landslide](#) victory in elections for the Lower House of the Diet, Japan's legislature. Takaichi now is well-positioned to [advance](#) her policy agenda, including issues of interest to the United States, such as increasing defense spending, building Japan's defense industrial base, implementing a 2025 U.S.-Japan trade and investment agreement, and enacting expansionary fiscal policies. Japan's first female premier, Takaichi is scheduled to visit Washington, DC, for a March 19 [summit](#) with President Trump, providing Members of Congress with a potential opportunity for meetings.

Takaichi's LDP Makes Resounding Comeback

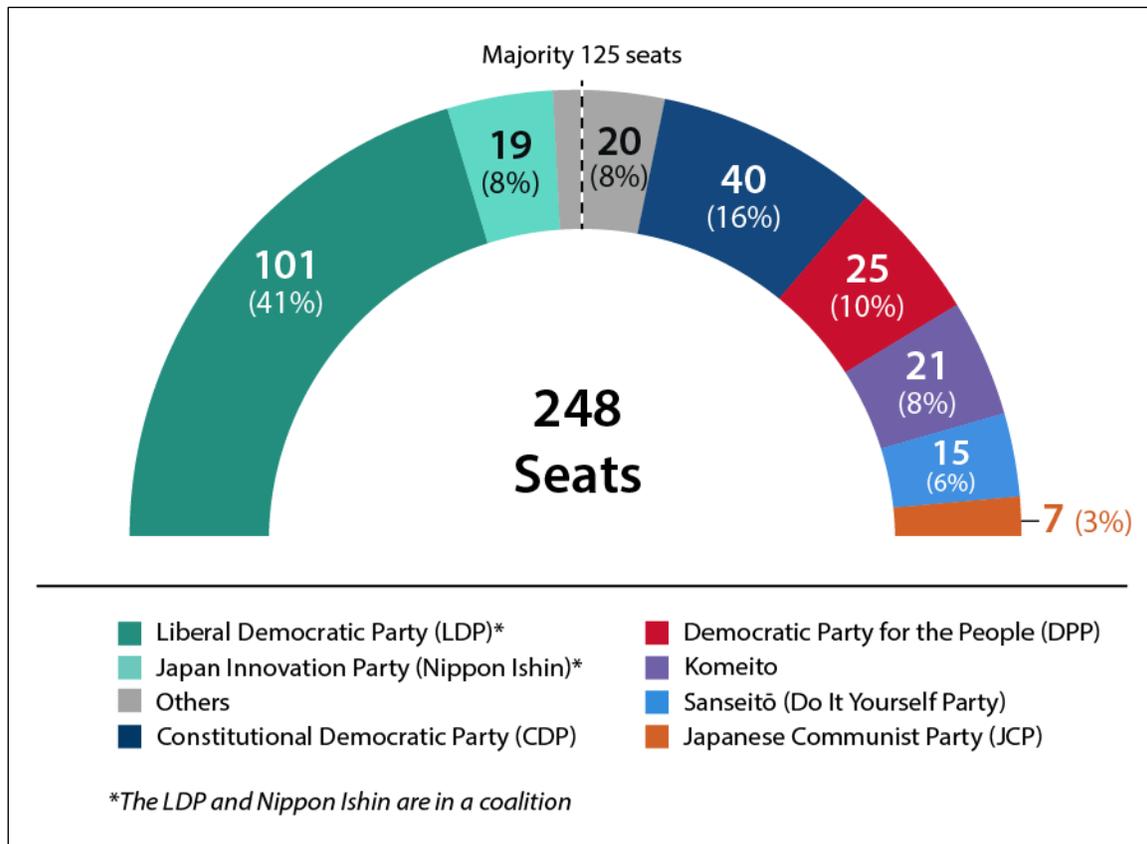
The election results place Takaichi in a dominant legislative position. The LDP won 316 seats, up from its previous total of 196. Its coalition partner, the Japan Innovation Party (JIP), won 36 seats. **(Figure 1.)** Takaichi—first elected as prime minister in October 2025—led the LDP to victory after the party's losses in 2024 and 2025 elections reduced it to minority status in both the Lower House and Upper House. The governing coalition now holds more than a [two-thirds supermajority](#), which [allows](#) it to override rejections of bills in the Upper House, where the coalition lacks a majority **(Figure 2)**. The elections decimated the largest opposition group, the Centrist Reform Alliance (CRA), which lost over 120 seats, reducing its total to 49. Meanwhile, right-wing party Sanseito (Do-It-Yourself Party) went from 2 to 15 seats, half its [pre-election aspirations](#). Experts attribute the victory to Takaichi's pre-election [popularity](#) and [the CRA's inability to resonate with the public](#), particularly [younger voters](#), among whom the LDP made substantial gains.

Takaichi may have an extended political runway. The next scheduled elections (for the Upper House) are not until July 2028. Lower House elections are not required until February 2030.

Figure I. Lower House Party Strength
Before and After February 2026 Elections



Source: "A Landslide for Takaichi's LDP: House of Representatives Election Results," Nippon.com, February 9, 2026.

Figure 2. Upper House Party Strength

Source: House of Councillors, The National Diet of Japan, February 11, 2026.

Implications for the United States

U.S.-Japan Economic Relations

Takaichi has [promised](#) a “responsible and proactive” fiscal policy, including potential cuts to consumption taxes aimed in part at addressing [rising costs of living](#). Takaichi also has [pledged](#) to promote [public-private investments](#) focused on strategic sectors. [Some reports](#) suggest that certain pre-election Japanese stimulus measures were partially aimed at mitigating potential effects of [U.S. tariff increases on Japan in 2025](#). Although Japan was granted lowered tariff rates as a result of the [2025 U.S.-Japan Framework Agreement](#), tariffs remain higher than 2024 rates on key Japanese exports (e.g., [vehicles](#)). Additionally, concerns about how Japan will fund Takaichi’s government spending plan may have led to recent [volatility in bond markets](#).

Takaichi now may have greater political space to manage trade relations with the United States, including [potential challenges](#) of fulfilling Japan’s pledge to [invest \\$550 billion](#) in strategic U.S. sectors as part of the 2025 Framework Agreement. Both sides have identified [potential investments](#) and [projects](#); in February 2026, some [media reports suggested initial investments](#) will be announced soon. Japan reportedly has faced pressure from the Trump Administration to deliver the investments; other countries with similar agreements have faced [tariff hike threats](#).

The U.S.-Japan Alliance

The LDP's victory could bolster Takaichi's ability to implement her defense goals, which may affect U.S.-Japan security relations. Amid perceived threats by China and North Korea, Takaichi has accelerated plans to increase Japan's defense spending to **2% of GDP**. With a fresh electoral mandate, the LDP **may choose** to pursue increasing defense spending **beyond the 2% of GDP** level, but views among LDP candidates before the election **appeared to diverge** on whether to do so and how to finance such increased spending. Last year, the Trump Administration **reportedly** asked Japan to increase its defense spending to 3.5% of GDP. In addition, the current U.S.-Japan agreement for sharing the costs of the roughly **60,000 U.S. troops** stationed across Japan **expires in March 2027**.

Meanwhile, Takaichi has reportedly **expressed interest in revising the Japanese constitution**, which renounces war and limits the use of the military. Such a revision could significantly **alter** the role of Japanese forces and how they operate within the alliance. Revising the constitution would **require** a two-thirds approval in both Diet chambers and a majority vote in a national referendum. Takaichi also intends to **draft** a new national security strategy by the end of 2026 and **to establish a National Intelligence Bureau**.

Japan's Regional Strategy

Takaichi has **committed** to continuing Japan's decade-old Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy, aimed at **preventing China from becoming a regional hegemon**. That strategy aims to boost the U.S.-Japan alliance, build Japan's defense industrial base, and **strengthen cooperation** with partners such as South Korea, Australia, and the Philippines. The latter two policies may reflect Japanese as an alliance partner.

Japan-China relations have sunk to their worst levels in years with Takaichi implying in November 2025 that Japan might respond militarily to Chinese military aggression against Taiwan. China responded with a range of punitive measures, including **restricting certain Japanese imports** and **curbing exports** of critical minerals. Takaichi has **said** she seeks a **"constructive and stable relationship" with Beijing** but has not retracted her statement. Some observers have **criticized** the Trump Administration for not doing more to publicly support Japan, which some speculate may reflect the Administration's desire to **avoid jeopardizing** Trump's planned April 2026 visit to China. **Some caution** that a softer U.S. approach to China on security or economic issues could impede U.S.-Japan cooperation on countering China's actions. H.Res. 971, S.Res. 547, and H.Con.Res. 71 condemn China's recent coercive actions against Japan and praise Japan's actions related to the Taiwan Strait.

Tensions with China could be further heightened and relations with South Korea strained if Takaichi's pushes to revise the constitution's pacifist clauses, **dismantles restrictions on defense industry exports**, or visits the Yasukuni Shrine, which honors Japanese who died for their country during war, and enshrines 14 Class A war criminals from the World War II era, when Imperial Japan colonized Korea and invaded China. She reportedly hopes to create **an environment** where neighboring countries would understand a Japanese premier visiting the shrine.

Author Information

Mark E. Manyin
Specialist in Asian Affairs

Kyla H. Kitamura
Analyst in International Trade and Finance

Cathleen D. Cimino-Isaacs
Specialist in International Trade and Finance

Daniel J. Longo
Analyst in Foreign Affairs

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