

8 February 2026

Takaichi restructures the political landscape

Key takeaways

- Prime Minister Takaichi Sanae exceeded even the most optimistic projections for the 8 February general election, leading the LDP to its largest-ever majority in the lower house.
- The victory reflected both her popularity, particularly with young voters, but also the apparent collapse of support for the newly created Centrist Reform Alliance (CRA), which lost longtime opposition strongholds across the country.
- Takaichi faces significant foreign and economic policy challenges but she also may face even fewer domestic obstacles than Abe Shinzō faced at the height of his power, with the CRA's parliamentary strength broken and many of its leaders driven from their seats.

While votes are still being counted, the general election has exceeded even the most optimistic projections for the Liberal Democratic Party as the party has reached 310 seats with roughly 30 seats left to call, securing an independent supermajority for the LDP for the first time ever. The supermajority will enable the government to overrule the upper house if necessary.

The result not only vindicates Takaichi's decision to gamble on a snap election but suggests that the political landscape has fundamentally changed. The LDP's victory appears to have been fueled not by a large increase in turnout – turnout was only two points higher than in 2024 – but rather a massive shift by young voters in favor of the LDP. At the same time, the gamble by the Constitutional Democratic Party (CDP) and Kōmeitō to form the Centrist Reform Alliance (CRA) appears to have completely failed. As of this writing, the CRA has won only six of 289 single-member districts (SMDs), fewer than the Democratic Party for the People (DPFP). Numerous CRA heavyweights have lost their seats as the LDP has swept prefectures that have been opposition

strongholds, suggesting that the demobilization of CDP voters – dismayed by party leader Noda Yoshihiko's decision to join forces with Kōmeitō – was a key factor in the sheer scale of the LDP's victory as the CRA was quickly overwhelmed in races that even the LDP expected to be close. The LDP has adapted to political changes in recent years – the changing attitudes of young voters (and their greater political involvement), the growing importance of social media for reaching voters – while the CRA's constituent parties not only failed to reach young voters but broke their own political base.

As a result, Takaichi will emerge from the general election facing virtually no political constraints. While her large majority could be unruly, the LDP's ranks will be swelled with Takaichi allies who recovered their seats and newcomers who will owe their seats to the prime minister, marginalizing moderates like former prime minister Ishiba Shigeru and his allies. At the same time, Ishin no Kai will have little leverage over the direction of the government; unlike the second Abe administration, which had Kōmeitō in the coalition as a “brake” on the LDP's ambitions, Takaichi has Ishin, which has called itself an “accelerator.” While she does not control the upper house, her political strength could result in either a party like Sanseitō lending its support, the LDP convincing a handful of lawmakers from other parties to defect, or, if necessary, the government wielding its supermajority to overwhelm the upper house. The DPFP, which will be closer in size to the CRA than anticipated, may stay on the opposition benches; party leader Tamaki Yūichirō said Sunday that there is little point in joining the government given the size of its majority. Finally, after several years of opposition parties gaining at the LDP's expense, the clock has been reset to 2012, when the Abe-led LDP dominated a system against a handful of weak and divided opposition parties. If anything, the opposition is in even worse shape now than in 2012. The CDP's half-completed merger with Kōmeitō – they have not merged their upper house lawmakers or local and prefectural organizations – may be stopped in its tracks. With senior lawmakers defeated, it is unclear who will lead the CDP/CRA and the party will have to grapple with its utter failure to connect with young voters (exit polls show that the party ranked fifth among young voters).

The upshot is that she has the space – and the time, not having to face an upper house election until 2028 and another general election until 2030 – to [pursue](#) an ambitious agenda. In the immediate term, it is likely that she will press hard for “responsible fiscal expansionism”; vindicated by her victory, it is unlikely that she will pare back her ambitions to spend more on defense, on industrial policy, and on social policy, including a consumption tax reduction in some form. Indeed, it is likely that she will seek to leverage her political strength to reduce the power of the Ministry of Finance (MOF), after the election the biggest remaining constraint on her ambitions. The most immediate question after the election is whether she uses the delay in passing the FY2026 budget to make additional changes that reflect her policy priorities and to begin moving to a system in which the general budget includes a greater portion of annual spending instead of relying on regular supplemental budgets. Otherwise, she is likely to use her political capital on right-wing priorities, including legislation on flag desecration, counter espionage, new controls on Japan's intake of foreign workers, and imperial

succession could all be forthcoming. In an interview Sunday she also suggested that she could lay the groundwork for a visit to Yasukuni Shrine, which could exacerbate tensions with China and undo some of the progress in bolstering cooperation with South Korea. Over the longer term, the likelihood that she might seek to use her mandate to revise the constitution, what would be a legacy-defining issue for her, before another general election has increased, though her lower house supermajority does not guarantee that revision would face no resistance in either the upper house or in a national referendum.

Ultimately, the most important remaining constraints on Takaichi are external, including both financial markets and the United States and China. Investors will be watching her words on fiscal policy, suggesting that she will continue to delicate dance with markets, signaling her commitment to “responsible” expansion even as she seeks to increase spending on her priorities. Meanwhile, she will still have to navigate a complicated situation with a Trump administration looking to make deals with Beijing – and expecting Japan to deliver significant funding from public financial institutions for investment in the US as per the terms of the US-Japan bilateral agreement – and expecting more from Japan in terms of defense spending (and arms purchases from the US) and, presumably, host-nation support for US forces in Japan. Meanwhile, as her reference to Yasukuni suggests, Takaichi could use her new mandate to dig in against China rather than seeking a resolution with Beijing. These are significant challenges, and missteps could contribute to falling approval and greater resistance from within the LDP. She could also lose young voters just as quickly as she gained them if inflation continues to erode real incomes.

But with a historic majority behind her, she is poised to go headlong in pursuit of a stronger, self-reliant, secure Japan.

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