

# New Japanese PM dissolves parliament, calls snap election

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11 October 2024

New Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba dissolved the lower house of parliament on Wednesday to call a snap general election for October 27. None of the major issues affecting the Japanese working class will be addressed by the parties in their campaigns, least of all Tokyo's growing preparations for war with China. Official campaigning will begin on October 15.

Ishiba took office on October 1 after being elected president of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) a few days earlier. He replaced outgoing PM Fumio Kishida, who stepped down after three years in office as his government's popularity fell amid scandals and growing opposition to Tokyo's support for Israel's genocide in Gaza.

Having come to power in a party vote dominated by the LDP's parliamentary members, Ishiba hopes the general election will provide a "mandate" for his government's far-right and pro-war agenda. He stated on October 7, "Since the new Cabinet was formed, I judge it necessary to dissolve [the lower house] to confirm the will of the people." The next election was not due until October 2025.

The lower house of the National Diet, or parliament, consists of 465 seats. The ruling coalition of the LDP and its junior partner Komeito currently have control over 255 seats and 32 seats respectively and are supported by three "independents." On Wednesday, the LDP announced that it had endorsed 279 candidates for the upcoming election. Komeito is a right-wing Buddhist party that has served in LDP-led coalition governments since 1999.

Mass support for the LDP's policies does not exist in Japan. Kishida's government backed Israel's genocide against Gaza, which is now expanding into Lebanon, and Ishiba will continue to do so. The genocide and Tokyo's support for it have been met with protests

since last year. Furthermore, workers are opposed to the government's economic policies as real wages continue to decline due to inflation. Wages rose slightly in June and July, an effect of summer bonuses—the first increases in 27 months—then fell again by 0.6 percent in August.

Ishiba has placed a heavy emphasis on Japan's remilitarisation, which is aimed at China—a policy that also lacks public support. He has continuously echoed Kishida, claiming, "Today's Ukraine may be tomorrow's East Asia," a phrase Ishiba repeated in his first parliamentary speech as prime minister last Friday. In other words, he is promoting the lie that Beijing is planning an "unprovoked" war against Taiwan, in order to justify the US-led military build-up throughout Asia against China and to goad Beijing into a war over the island.

Ishiba no doubt assumes the LDP will easily coast to victory in the upcoming election. While the LDP is unpopular, the main opposition Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan (CDP), which currently holds 98 seats, is even more so. The working class has not forgotten the three years the Democrats were in office from 2009 to 2012, during which they reneged on all major social pledges, while similarly supporting the US-led war preparations against China. Since then, the Democrats have put forward no serious opposition to the LDP.

A CDP victory would not block Japan's remilitarisation. Despite the party's posturing, the Democrats have backed both the US/NATO war against Russia in Ukraine and Israel's genocide against Gaza. Pledges to repeal the highly unpopular 2015 military legislation, which allows Japan to take part in military conflicts overseas in the name of so-called "collective self-defence," are also not worth the paper

on which they are printed. Newly elected CDP head Yoshihiko Noda stated while campaigning for party leadership last month that a potential CDP government would not repeal the laws.

Other so-called “left-wing” parties, such as the Stalinist Japanese Communist Party (JCP), do little more than act as appendages of the CDP, providing it with a phony “progressive” veneer.

None of these parties will offer any resistance to Ishiba’s new cabinet, which consists of four former defence ministers. This includes Ishiba himself, whose career has been focused on the military. Yoshimasa Hayashi, who remains chief cabinet secretary from Kishida’s cabinet, briefly served as defence minister in 2008.

New Defence Minister Gen Nakatani previously served in the role under former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe from 2014 to 2016 and oversaw the ramming through parliament of the 2015 military legislation. As part of a delegation led by Ishiba, Nakatani visited Taiwan in August, meeting with President Lai Ching-te and expressed his support for Taipei in a war against Beijing.

New Foreign Minister Takeshi Iwaya also served as defence minister under Abe, from 2018 to 2019. Iwaya fully backs strengthening bilateral military ties with South Korea and trilateral ties between the two countries and the United States. In August 2023, Fumio Kishida established a de facto trilateral military alliance during a meeting with US President Joe Biden and South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol at Camp David near Washington. Ishiba will undoubtedly maintain this relationship.

Ishiba has also pledged to revise the US-Japan security treaty to give Tokyo more of an independent military role in the Indo-Pacific, called for US nuclear weapon sharing with Japan, and the formation of an “Asian NATO” which would be directed against China.

The idea of an “Asian NATO,” however, has received pushback in Washington, as it would cut across the fraudulent US claims to defend the “free and open” Indo-Pacific while not explicitly targeting China. Katrin Fraser Katz, an adjunct fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), complained that Ishiba’s proposal did not match the policies of Abe or Kishida. She claimed of US strategy at an October 3

seminar, “The beauty of it, the flexibility of it, is ‘We’re not anti-China.’”

The comment is absurd. Washington has continuously goaded Beijing over Taiwan, challenging the One China policy stating that Beijing is the legitimate government of all China including the island. The US and Japan have de facto recognised that policy by maintaining formal diplomatic relations with Beijing alone. The US military has encouraged and overseen Philippine naval operations in the South China Sea that have led to clashes around disputed features, disputes that have been whipped up over the last 15 years by Washington. All of this is aimed at making Beijing “fire the first shot.”

Ishiba was quick to reassure Washington. Speaking with Biden by phone on October 2, he emphasised that his administration would work to strengthen the US-Japan military alliance along the lines established first by Abe and furthered by Kishida. This includes increasing military spending to two percent of GDP by 2027 and amending Article 9 of the constitution, which formally bars Japan from going to war overseas or maintaining a military.

Plans for rewriting Article 9 have been in the works for years, with the supporters of Abe proposing that a new paragraph be added to explicitly recognise Japan’s military, the Self-Defence Forces. However, Ishiba wants to go further and supports removing Article 9 altogether.



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