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Japan

Landslide Victory For The Ruling LDP Party in the General Election

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Although this historic outcome was enough shocking, a more significant change for us was the defeat and marginalization suffered by the parliamentary Lefts - comprising the Japanese Communist Party (JCP), the Social Democratic Party (SDP), and Reiwa Shinsengumi, a progressive populist party, as well as the progressive wing of the former CDP.

Another significant change was the victory of LDP in Okinawa over the "All Okinawa" forces (a network of anti-US military bases movements). The latter lost all seats in the House of Representatives. When the Takaichi administration is stepping up its right-wing agenda—pushing for military expansion, arms exports, and the transformation of Okinawa and the Nansei Islands into military fortresses, the people resisting the militarization in Okinawa and the other regions lost the most important voices in the Diet.

Regenerating the left is now our urgent task. I will discuss the current situation of Japanese politics based on a detail analysis on the changes in voters' political choices and clarify the immediate tasks for the regeneration of leftists in our country.

Voter Turnout and Dynamic Changes in the Political Situation

The defining characteristics of this general election that warrant our attention and analysis are: (1) LDP's landslide victory, particularly its overwhelming dominance in single-seat constituencies; (2) crushing defeat of the Centrist Reform Alliance, especially the devastation of the former CDP camp; (3) further isolation and marginalization of the parliamentary Left; and (4) total loss of seats for the "All Okinawa" movement.

Before analyzing these points, let us look into the voter turnout. The turnout was 56.26%, an increase of 2.82% from the previous election (2024) and 0.34% from the one before that (2021). Yet, despite the immense popularity of Prime Minister Takaichi, this turnout was the fifth lowest in the postwar era. Although age-specific data has not yet been available, a Ministry of Internal Affairs sampling survey from last year's The House of Councilors election clearly indicated a trend of an increase in youth turnout (increasing significantly among those in their late 20s from 38.19% in 2024 to 51.97%). It is reasonable to assume this trend is continuing or even accelerating. I was at a polling station all the day as an observer in an locality with many elderly residents, and noticed an unexpectedly high number of young people turned out. This implies that while a new layer of young voters is heading to the polls, another segment is withdrawing from the act of voting. Whether this correlates with the defeat of the political center cannot be determined at this moment.

The LDP's Overwhelming Victory Supported by Strong Youth Turnout

The LDP secured 316 seats, a figure exceeding even the records in "Postal Privatization Election" in 2005 under the Koizumi administration and the "National Crisis Breakthrough Election" in 2017 under the Abe administration. In fact, since 14 seats were "conceded" to other parties in some districts the votes for LDP (in the proportional representation block) exceeded the votes needed for all their nominees to be elected. So effectively LDP would have got 330 seats. In single-seat constituencies, they won 249 out of 289. This was a vivid manifestation of the characteristics of the single-seat constituency system. In regions like Hokkaido, Tohoku, Niigata, Tokyo, Kanagawa, Aichi, and Okinawa—where opposition cooperation led by the CDP previously won seats—the LDP achieved a near-total

victory.

In the proportional vote, the LDP garnered 21 million votes, second only to the approximately 25.88 million in the 2005 "Postal Election" (which saw a much higher turnout of over 69%). Exit polls by Yomiuri, NHK, and Nippon TV indicated that while the percentage of young people voting for the LDP was lower in 2024, it surged to 38% among 18–29-year-olds this time. Similarly, an ANN exit poll showed that 44% of teenagers and 37% of those in their 20s voted for the LDP. Given that these figures were only 12% and 11% respectively in last year's The House of Councilors election, it is clear that PM Takaichi's populist appeal is heavily driven by the younger generation.

Analysts explain LDP's victory was a success in framing the election as a "binary choice": "Takaichi or not." Takaichi's political style—avoiding backroom deal-making and "banquet politics"—and her "clear and easy-to-understand" rhetoric likely left a positive impression on young people. According to Asahi Shimbun exit polls, 48% of those who "supported" the Takaichi Cabinet voted for the LDP in the proportional block, a figure not vastly different from the Kishida or Ishiba eras. The difference lies in the height of the approval rating itself. As the Asahi Shimbun noted, "The base of cabinet supporters has swelled compared to the last two elections of the House of Representatives. Cabinet approval tends to reflect the Prime Minister's personal popularity, and it can be said that PM Takaichi's personal popularity led to the LDP's seat gain." Additionally, support from unaffiliated voters rose from 14% to 23%, making the LDP their top choice.

One factor contributing to this high support was Takaichi's refusal to retract her comments on the "Taiwan Contingency," despite the resulting tensions with China. The younger generation supporting Takaichi has no lived experience of economic "growth." To such a generation, the slogan "A Strong and Prosperous Japan" likely resonated as an expression of hope against a sense of stagnation and anxiety about the future.

Regarding the issue of tightening regulations on foreigners—which significantly boosted the far-right Sanseito party in last year's The House of Councilors election and paved the way for Takaichi's victory in the LDP leadership race—a different trend emerged. According to Yomiuri exit polls, among those who prioritized "foreigner policy," the LDP's share rose to 28%, overtaking Sanseito's 26% (which had previously dominated this segment at 43%). This indicates that conservative voters who had defected to Sanseito returned to the LDP.

The LDP also dominated the SNS sphere, outperforming Sanseito and the Democratic Party for the People (DPFP). It is reported that PM Takaichi's short videos were viewed 140 million times, and vast sums were spent on TV commercials and automated phone campaigns featuring her voice.

With this landslide victory, the Takaichi administration now has the power to re-pass bills in the House of Representatives even if rejected by the House of Councilors, granting her considerable free hand in policy execution. In the House of Councilors, the overwhelming majority in the House of Representatives will make it easier to form issue-based alliances with the DPFP or Sanseito. Moving forward, the administration is expected to push "economic measures centered on proactive fiscal policy," "amendments to the three defense documents, the creation of a National Intelligence Bureau, and the drafting of an Anti-Spying Law," and potentially "a review of the Three Non-Nuclear Principles." Other likely priorities include "strengthening foreigner management policies," "legalizing the use of maiden names as professional names," and "laying the groundwork for revising the Imperial House Law and the Constitution." Furthermore, Keidanren (Japan Business Federation) has called on the administration to realize a "science and technology-based nation through continuous innovation, promoting integrated tax, fiscal, and social security reforms, revitalizing regional economies and societies, labor reforms, maintaining and strengthening a free and open international economic order while considering economic security, securing a cheap and stable supply of clean energy and promoting Green Transformation (GX), and corporate governance reforms for sustainable growth." The question now is how opposition movements can prepare to counter the materialization of these policies across various fields.

The Significance of the Former Constitutional Democratic Camp's Catastrophic Defeat

While the Centrist Reform Alliance (CRA) suffered a crushing defeat with only 49 seats, the real loser was the former CDP wing. They secured only 7 seats in single-seat constituencies and 14 through proportional representation. However, 7 of those were effectively "conceded" by the LDP. Without this, the former CDP wing would have won only 14 seats—one-tenth of their pre-election strength—compared to the 28 seats won by the former Komeito wing. The CRA proportional vote plummeted to just under 10.14 million, a drastic drop from the 17.53 million combined votes of the CDP and Komeito in the previous election.

Under the leadership of Noda, CDP made a clear shift to "center-right voters." By abandoning the "united candidate" strategy with the JCP and others, they became unable to win single-seat constituencies alone. Therefore they pivoted rightward. This was the backdrop for the formation of the Centrist Reform Alliance with Komeito. However, the "coup-like" dissolution of the CDP and the formation of this alliance caused massive confusion among supporters. Consequently, only 64% of those who voted for the CDP in last year's proportional block voted for the CRA this time; 30% voted for parties other than CRA or the LDP. The disappointment was likely immense for those who saw the CDP—originally formed in 2017 to oppose the "logic of exclusion"—abandon its core policies on nuclear energy and national security.

In an election framed as the choice of the leader - "Takaichi or not," - the "powerful posture" of party leaders was the decisive factor. In this populist arena, the CRA leadership was mocked online as the "5G" (Five Geezers) and lacked the appeal to reach unaffiliated voters compared in comparison with Takaichi. An poll after this election showed that 81% of people attributed the LDP's win to "expectations for PM Takaichi's political stance," while 64% cited a "lack of appeal in opposition leaders."

The most serious result for us is that the progressive wing within the former CDP has been nearly wiped out. Why were these progressive lawmakers unable to resist the coup-like dissolution and policy shift? It is a deeply regrettable outcome. While some suggest CRA might split back into Komeito and the CDP, it is doubtful the former CDP side has the energy left to choose a path of cooperation with the parliamentary Left again. If they had that energy, they would have chosen a split when CRA was first formed. Instead, it is more likely they will be swallowed into some form of center-right realignment led by Komeito.

Bottomless decrease of Parliamentary Left's Proportional Vote

The biggest losers in this election were the parliamentary Left: the JCP, Reiwa, and the SDP. These three parties fell from 18 seats to just 5. More serious than the seat count, however, is the proportional vote. Since Reiwa Shinsengumi first contested a national election in 2019, these three parties together consistently garnered 7 to 8 million votes—a stable support base for the Left. This time, they failed to even reach 5 million. Previously, Reiwa's growth compensated for the decline of the JCP and SDP, but that structure has collapsed; the "bottom has fallen out."

The JCP secured 2.5 million proportional votes, but its decline remains unchecked. Their appeal for a "leftist rally" to counter the rightward shift of Japanese politics failed to gain traction among former CDP-supporting liberals. Local JCP activists are aging, making the future of the party uncertain. Even their reputed daily newspaper "Akahata" is said to be in financial crisis. Amidst this, some new challenges were made. For example, a kind of cooperation

between the JCP, SDP, and New Socialist Party has been developed in some areas, and limited electoral cooperation with Reiwa were tried in certain districts. Whether these initiatives will be adopted as the general policy of these parties remains to be seen.

Meanwhile, the SDP fell well below 1 million votes, hitting a historic low and failing to secure a single seat in a general election for the first time, including the former Japan Socialist Party era. The party's very existence is at risk.

Reiwa Shinsengumi's visibility plummeted due to Representative Yamamoto's absence from the campaign for health reasons. The party remains heavily dependent on Yamamoto's charismatic appeal. Their proportional vote dropped to roughly 44% of their previous totals, securing only one seat due to an LDP shortage of candidates. Furthermore, as the ruling party began partially adopting "consumption tax abolition"—Reiwa's signature policy—the party lost its unique selling point.

The Loss of "All Okinawa" Seats

Another grave defeat was the loss of all four seats in Okinawa. The "All Okinawa" candidates were defeated in every district, failing even to secure proportional seats. Consequently, Okinawa's voice against the construction of the new base at Henoko has vanished from the House of Representatives. Internal friction within the "All Okinawa" camp, particularly a public dispute between the SDP central leadership and the local Okinawa chapter regarding candidate selection, contributed to this "mutual destruction."

Ongoing Political Realignment of Centrist Forces

Japan Innovation Party (JIP) and the DPFP also saw their seat counts decrease (excluding "conceded" seats). JIP's focus on a "double election" in Osaka boosted its local vote but hindered its growth as a national party, reinforcing its image as a regional entity—perhaps akin to the relationship between Germany's CDU and CSU. The DPFP, while losing overall votes, remained the second choice for voters in their teens to 30s after the LDP. As we head toward the 2028 election, we expect further realignment among center-right forces as they compete to show "policy affinity" with the Takaichi administration.

New Challenges for Leftist Regeneration

As we pointed out after last year's The House of Councilors election, the Left is largely invisible to the younger generation and no longer functions as a channel for political participation. We must start by facing this reality. We need broad exchanges of opinion and experience, beyond our own circles, to understand why our claims are not reaching the youth.

Regenerating the Left is inseparable from the struggle against military expansion and constitutional revision, solidarity with local movements in Okinawa, and addressing the economic demands of the precarious "underclass." Furthermore, we must concretize an Eco-Socialist project as an alternative to the impending climate catastrophe.

These tasks have become even more urgent as the "bottom has fallen out" for the parliamentary Left. What is

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required now is a grounded, long-term discussion on how to deliver the Left's message to the youth while maintaining a global perspective. This process involves surviving the current political climate, collaborating with radical movements, and preparing the ideological groundwork for a future mass upsurge. Our contribution will be to articulate the image of an Eco-Socialist society and its transitional demands in a way that resonates with the younger generation.

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Translated by Tsutomu Teramoto from "Weekly Kakehashi (Bridge)"

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