



# WHAT WAS ACHIEVED AT THE JAPAN–U.S. SUMMIT? PRIME MINISTER TAKAICHI AND THE ASSERTION OF JAPAN’S PRESENCE

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## Abstract

On March 19, 2026, the Prime Minister of Japan and the President of the United States held a Japan–U.S. summit meeting at the White House. What were the outcomes of this meeting? Historically and economically, Japan and the United States have cultivated a close diplomatic relationship, exemplified by the Japan–U.S. Security Treaty. Particularly in today’s rapidly evolving international environment, the roles expected of both countries are of considerable importance. What issues were addressed at this summit? What positions were articulated and achieved? Furthermore, what implications might this meeting have for the future of global affairs? This paper focuses on the words and actions of Sanae Takaichi, analyzing them from a sociolinguistic perspective. It examines her visit to the United States, the range of arguments both supporting and opposing her summit meeting with Donald Trump, as well as Japan’s internal sense of “crisis” regarding the issue of the Strait of Hormuz and the China–Taiwan issue. It also explores her **rapport**-oriented communicative style in her interactions with Trump. This analysis is situated within the broader context of future Japan–U.S. relations and the evolving international order. As primary sources, this study draws upon major newspapers, online materials, and television reports to examine the actual circumstances surrounding the summit.

## Keywords

Hormuz, Japan Self-Defense Forces, Presence, Survival-Threatening Situation

## Introduction:

Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi, the leader of the Japanese government and the nation, attended the Japan–U.S. summit meeting at the White House on March 19, 2026. The initial agenda (and still a central focus) was the increasingly tense Taiwan issue and how to respond to China. In addition, topics such as trade, the economy, and diplomacy were also expected to be discussed. However, the situation was complicated by major recent developments. In Venezuela, President Maduro was detained in a sudden operation—reportedly arrested along with his spouse, transferred to the United States, and subjected to trial. Furthermore, more recently, the United States, in coordination with Israel, carried out a surprise strike on Iran, targeting the country’s leadership. This operation reportedly resulted in the killing of the head of state, Ali Khamenei, along with nearly 40 of his close associates. These two major incidents involving the United States have triggered widespread debate, both domestically and internationally, with opinions sharply divided. In the following section, I will briefly outline some critical arguments—particularly from a Japanese perspective—regarding Sanae Takaichi’s visit to the United States and her summit meeting with Donald Trump.

### 1. Several voices have raised objections to Prime Minister Takaichi’s U.S. visit and the Japan–U.S. summit

Kihei Maekawa is former Vice Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (*Monbu Kagakusho Jimu Jikan*). **Maekawa** has expressed his critical views of Takaichi on X. While his opinions are divided, Maekawa’s remarks criticizing Takaichi have attracted significant attention in Japan. Incidentally, the Administrative Vice-Minister of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology represents the pinnacle of the bureaucratic hierarchy within the ministry, a position reached by only a select few officials. In

particular, Maekawa served as Director-General for Policy Planning and Coordination (2010), Director-General of the Elementary and Secondary Education Bureau (2013) among others.

Let me cite some of Maekawa's actual comments from X.

1. Prime Minister Takaichi should absolutely not go to meet Trump. There are countless reasons why she should not (March 14).
2. At this point, she should "come down with acute pneumonia" and cancel her visit to the United States (March 13).
3. Takaichi's visit to the U.S. should be called off at the last minute. That's her specialty, isn't it? (March 2).
4. Takaichi, who flatters Trump, should never again utter the words "rule of law" (March 1).
5. The sense of reassurance that "we can just leave it to the Liberal Democratic Party" is nothing but an illusion. The expectation that "Prime Minister Takaichi will deliver" is also nothing but an illusion (January 29).
6. In order for more people to understand that Sanae Takaichi is frighteningly incompetent, I think it is acceptable to call her "**Bakaichi**" (January 21).

In particular, "**Bakaichi**" (ばかいち／バカイチ) is not a standard Japanese word you'll find in dictionaries — but it's often formed by combining "baka" (馬鹿／ばか) and "ichi" (一).

- "**Baka**" by itself is a very common Japanese insult meaning "stupid," "foolish," "idiot," or "moron." It's widely used informally and can range from light-hearted to genuinely insulting depending on tone and context.
- When someone uses *bakaichi* in an online or colloquial context (e.g., internet slang, memes, nickname style), they're usually implying "number one fool" or "the best at being foolish/stupid." This interpretation fits how such compound nicknames sometimes originate in internet slang or playful naming.

**It's insulting or derogatory.** Calling a politician *bakaichi* would be akin to calling them *the top idiot* or *the biggest fool* in English — a strong negative judgment rather than a neutral descriptor.

As can be seen, his dissenting views are remarkably prominent. As a former Administrative Vice Minister of Education, who occupied one of the highest bureaucratic positions in the Japanese government, it is undeniable that, regardless of differing opinions, he has expressed some rather extreme positions.

Similarly, one can also mention Toru Hashimoto, who previously served as both Governor of Osaka Prefecture and Mayor of Osaka City, as someone who has clearly expressed a negative view of Takaichi's visit to the United States and the summit meeting. In a news report published by J-Cast News (2026), Hashimoto clearly stated that he does not approve of this approach, which implies that there are actions Japan cannot take under the strict provisions of its constitution. Essentially, this means that Hashimoto opposes the idea of potentially sending a ship to the Strait of Hormuz to protect Japan's interests in the oil industry.

Similarly, Kenji Minemura, a former reporter for the major newspaper The Asahi Shimbun who has served as a correspondent in Washington and Beijing, has argued that Japan should demand an explanation for why the United States carried out the attack on Iran (Asahi Shinbun, 2026a). He further points out that, as an ally of the United States, Japan has the right to request the sharing of information. In essence, he is asserting that Japan should demand a much clearer explanation regarding the conflict between Iran and the United States.

Taken as a whole, it becomes clear that many individuals—including government bureaucrats such as the Administrative Vice Minister of Education, the Governor and Mayor of Osaka, as well as members of the media, such as reporters for the Asahi Shimbun—have expressed negative views regarding this war. Of course, this cannot be taken to mean that such opinions dominate the entire Japanese media landscape. Nevertheless, it can be said that at least some of the perspectives of experts are being reflected.

According to Chief Cabinet Secretary Deputy Masanao Ozaki, who accompanied the prime minister at the summit meeting, during the closed-door portion of the talks that followed, President Trump reportedly requested that Japan and other countries "contribute" (貢献) to ensuring the safety of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz. The prime minister acknowledged that securing safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz is vital from the perspective of stable energy supply and stated that Japan would continue to take all possible measures within the bounds of the law. The "contribution" sought by President Trump is widely understood to include the potential deployment of the Self-Defense Forces to the Strait of Hormuz. However, dispatching forces to an active conflict zone is legally difficult, and no clear prospects have been established. While deployment after the cessation of hostilities may be considered, ensuring the safety of personnel would remain a key challenge, and domestic public opinion in Japan toward U.S. strikes on Iran is also severe.

One noteworthy development within the Trump administration was the resignation of a cabinet member. Joe Kent, who serves as the head of the U.S. National Counterterrorism Center, announced on social media on the 17th that he would resign, stating, "In good conscience, I cannot support the ongoing war in Iran" (e.g., Reuters News, 2026a). According to U.S. media reports, this marks the first time that a senior official in the Trump

administration has publicly announced their resignation in opposition to military operations against Iran. Aiko Nishikida, a specialist in Middle Eastern politics, stated that opposing a war conducted without clear strategic objectives is only natural, and pointed out that “the world is being thrown into turmoil by someone like a baby recklessly brandishing immense weapons.” The day after his resignation, Kent appeared on the podcast of Tucker Carlson—a former Fox News conservative influencer and a close friend—where he claimed that “there is a possibility that Israel was involved in the 2024 attempted assassination of Donald Trump and the 2025 assassination of right-wing commentator Charlie Kirk.” At present, a growing number of prominent influencers who had been ardent supporters of MAGA, including Tucker Carlson, are beginning to distance themselves from the movement over the war in Iran. Kent’s resignation may have implications less for the internal workings of the Trump administration than for the broader MAGA movement that underpins his political base. At the same time, public approval of the Trump administration appears to be declining amid rising oil prices and other domestic pressures. According to a recent private poll, the administration’s approval rating has slipped into the high 30 percent range (Reuters News, 2026b).

Here, let us take a moment to consider the concept that lies at the core of Japan–U.S. diplomatic issues, namely what is referred to as a “situation threatening the survival” (*sonritsu kiki jitai*).

## 2. What is the *Sonritsu Kiki Jitai* (存立危機事態) ?

The idea of the *sonritsu kiki jitai* (survival-threatening situation) concept was first discussed during the premiership of Shinzo Abe about eleven years ago. It refers to a situation in which an attack on a close partner country poses a clear danger to Japan’s survival and the fundamental rights of its people, thereby allowing Japan to exercise limited collective self-defense. It is useful to briefly address the Strait of Hormuz issue, which served as the starting point of the broader Japan–U.S. negotiation problem. Specifically, this refers to a situation in which Iran has laid torpedoes or naval mines in the narrow strait, obstructing the passage of oil tankers transporting crude oil. For example, Kharg Island serves as one of Iran’s most important oil export terminals with deep-water facilities that handle roughly 90 % of the country’s crude exports, and it has significant strategic economic and military importance. Some reports suggest that the Trump administration has considered military action against Iran’s Kharg Island in an effort to secure leverage by disrupting Iran’s oil export capability and applying economic pressure (e.g., CNN, 2026). For Japan in particular, the core of this issue lies in what is referred to as a “survival-threatening situation.” But what exactly does this concept mean? Let us briefly explain it in the following section.

If naval mines were to be laid in the Strait of Hormuz, this would constitute a “survival-threatening situation” for Japan. At the time of the crisis over a possible closure of the Strait of Hormuz, the government’s position was that such a scenario would require a response. In fact, it was widely discussed that, in order to resolve such a crisis, the deployment of the Self-Defense Forces—including minesweeping vessels—might well become necessary.

In the case of Taiwan, which has also been a subject of debate, the government acknowledged that it could constitute a survival-threatening situation for Japan, a statement that provoked strong backlash from China. However, regarding the current situation in the Strait of Hormuz, Takaichi has stated (on March 2 and again on March 11) that it would not amount to such a situation—despite providing no detailed explanation for this position. Put simply, this suggests a certain inconsistency. In the case of Taiwan, it is said that a survival-threatening situation could arise, whereas in the case of Hormuz, it is said that it would not. This implies that Taiwan is viewed as a major and immediate concern for Japan—given its geographic proximity—while Hormuz is not regarded as equally critical, in part because it is geographically distant. In other words, Japan appears to be applying the brakes in the case of Hormuz, while pressing the accelerator in the case of Taiwan.

One possible explanation lies in the level of public and media awareness. There appears to be a strong reluctance to accept casualties in a Hormuz scenario. The idea that Japanese lives could be lost in minesweeping operations is widely seen as unacceptable. This is something that Takaichi cannot ignore and may, in part, reflect a political constraint. If Japanese casualties were to occur in Hormuz, it would likely become a major domestic issue. Minesweepers, often constructed with non-steel materials such as wood and reinforced plastics, are particularly vulnerable to attack, and public opinion—including media and online platforms—would likely strongly oppose such risks (e.g., Hasegawa, 2026a). In particular, Yukihiro Hasegawa continues to play a prominent role in Japan particularly as a journalist specializing in international affairs, and as a former newspaper reporter who once served as Deputy Editorial Writer at the Tokyo Shimbun. It can be said that his views contain many points well worth careful consideration.

By contrast, the Taiwan issue is often discussed in a very different tone. There are many voices advocating a tougher stance toward China, even calling for strong deterrence. Some may view Takaichi’s position favorably in this regard. In this sense, while caution prevails in Hormuz, a more assertive posture is encouraged in relation to Taiwan. This suggests that the underlying factor may not simply be inconsistency on the part of the Takaichi administration, but rather the broader mindset of the public. There is a tendency to avoid scenarios that could lead to Japanese casualties, while supporting firm rhetoric toward China—where deterrence may be perceived as

achievable at relatively low cost. If Japan refrains from involvement in Hormuz by defining it as not constituting a survival-threatening situation, it can also avoid the risk of casualties. In contrast, by labeling a Taiwan contingency as such a situation, Japan may seek to deter China without necessarily incurring immediate human costs.

For this reason, it may be somewhat misplaced to position all responsibility solely on Takaichi. The more fundamental issue lies in public awareness. Japan is not unified in its perception of and response to crisis situations. The Japan–U.S. summit can, for the time being, be regarded as a success. However, the United States likely expects Japan—given its heavy dependence on the Strait of Hormuz—to play a more **substantial role**. Moreover, the conflict itself could become prolonged, and the United States may even be contemplating ground operations on a significant scale. In this context, Japan’s contributions may increasingly be called into question. It is therefore essential to pay close attention not only to the policies of the Takaichi administration, but also to the evolving public perception of risk, responsibility, and the question of whether Japan is prepared to accept potential sacrifices. Japanese public opinion seems to reflect the view that “involvement in Taiwan may be unavoidable, but there is a strong desire to avoid being drawn into the Middle East.” This appears to be a plausible underlying sentiment. It also seems that Takaichi, at least to some extent, is implicitly accommodating this view. Here, let us briefly examine some dissenting views within the United States regarding the war with Iran. In particular, we will focus on expressions of opposition that emerged from within the U.S. government itself.

Up to this point, we have discussed opposition views regarding Takaichi’s visit to the United States, as well as Japan’s concerns over a so-called “survival-threatening situation,” and dissenting opinions from within the Trump administration—such as those expressed by Kent—against a potential war with Iran. Despite the superficial success of her visit, it could be said that Takaichi harbors a certain degree of unease.

### 3. Takaichi’s backers: *Sonzaikan* (presence or 存在感)

At this juncture, let us turn to the perspective of Shinsuke Sugiyama, a former ambassador to the United States, who can be seen as one of Takaichi’s supporters. Sugiyama is a highly respected diplomat in Japan. He was one-time time ambassador to the USA from Japan. His roles include the following:

- 2008: Director-General of the Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- 2011: Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs (Economic Affairs)
- 2013: Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs (Political Affairs)
- 2016: Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs (Administrative Affairs), the top bureaucrat in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- 2018–2021: Ambassador of Japan to the United States

**Some of his diplomatic role in the ministry of Foreign Affairs are highlighted in the following positions:**

- Deeply involved in North Korea issues and Japan–U.S. security policy
- Played a central role in coordinating diplomacy with the United States during the Trump administration
- Known as a “practical diplomat” in Japan–U.S. relations

Regarding the Japan–U.S. summit meeting held at the White House in the United States on March 19, Shinsuke Sugiyama, the former Japanese ambassador to the United States, who also served as Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs—effectively becoming the top bureaucrat in Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs—offered the following overall assessment.

In short, he suggested that the meeting could be described as a “success.” In particular, Sugiyama stated that at the summit, Japan clearly demonstrated its “presence” to Donald Trump, and that the United States acknowledged this. According to Sugiyama, this notion of “presence” (存在感) refers to the distinct standing of Japan and the Japanese people—meaning that, unlike other countries (for example, NATO member states), Japan conveyed its own unique presence to the United States, even beyond legal frameworks. Sugiyama argued that this was the key outcome of the meeting: that Japan succeeded in making its presence clearly recognized by the United States (BS Fuji Prime News, 2026). Here, let us briefly discuss the debates on Japan’s peace and security that were also addressed during the administration of Shinzo Abe.

Furthermore, I would like to highlight comments by Kuniaki Miyake, a former senior official in the Japanese government, who is widely respected for his insightful analysis and deep understanding of Japanese politics. During the Japan–U.S. summit, President Trump called on countries to escort vessels through the Strait of Hormuz; however, most nations effectively declined. In this context, Prime Minister Takaichi’s statements served as a crucial support to the isolated president. When asked by reporters whether he was satisfied with Japan’s response, Trump noted that, unlike NATO members, Japan had provided exceptionally strong backing. Kuniaki Miyake, now the director and special advisor at the Canon Institute for Global Studies, assessed the situation positively, stating that “Japan’s approach, which differentiated itself from NATO, was a victory.” He further

explained that, given it was already apparent no country would deploy vessels to the Strait of Hormuz, Japan's willingness to contribute to the extent possible was particularly valuable for President Trump (Bloomberg, 2026). Here, as one of the key concepts related to Japan's legal framework, let us briefly review an argument concerning peace and security.

#### 4. The Legislation for Peace and Security

The Legislation for Peace and Security (平和安全法制), enacted in 2015, expanded the operational scope of the Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) under the framework of Japan's pacifist constitution.

For example, the legislation allows

- (1) Exercise limited **collective self-defense**
- (2) Provide broader **logistical support** to allies (especially the United States)
- (3) Participate more actively in international peacekeeping operations
- (4) Respond to "gray-zone" situations that fall short of full-scale war

It also allows Japan to use "collective self-defense"(集団の自衛権) which indicates that Japan can use force to defend an ally (e.g. the United States) if Japan's survival is threatened. For instance, Japan may use force when:

An armed attack against Japan or a close ally threatens Japan's survival. Furthermore, there is no other appropriate means to repel the attack, and the use of force is limited to the minimum necessary level. Regarding what is called preemptive strike (先制攻撃), Japan does not explicitly authorize the preemptive strikes. However, it allows action when an attack is imminent and threaten Japan's survival. To summarize, the 2015 security legislation marked a major shift in Japan's defense policy by allowing limited collective self-defense and expanding the global role of the JSDF (i.e., Japan Self Defense Force), while still maintaining constitutional constraints under Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution. One interesting question is the following: Does the 2015 security legislation cover areas like the Middle East, such as near the Strait of Hormuz? The answer is "Yes." The Legislation for Peace and Security is not geographically limited to areas surrounding Japan. It can apply to distant regions, including the Middle East, if the situation meets certain legal conditions. For example, the Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) may operate near the Strait of Hormuz if:

- The situation has an **important influence on Japan's peace and security**, or
- It constitutes a **survival-threatening situation** for Japan

The Strait of Hormuz is a critical chokepoint for global oil transportation, and Japan depends heavily on energy imports from the Middle East. According to some surveys, 70 to 80 percent of oil operation has to be done through the Strait of Hormuz. The rate is limited to 1 to 2 percent for the United States. Therefore, a disruption in this area could directly affect Japan's survival and economy. Under the 2015 legislation, Japan may:

- Provide **logistical support** to allied forces
- Conduct **maritime security operations**
- Protect allied vessels (**protection of allied ships**)
- Deploy naval units (**naval deployment**)

However, Japan still faces constitutional constraints under Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution. The use of force is strictly limited to cases where Japan's survival is at stake and must be kept to the minimum necessary level. In summary, the 2015 security legislation allows Japan to operate even in distant regions like the Middle East, including near the Strait of Hormuz, but only under strict legal conditions related to Japan's security and survival.

#### 5. Takaichi's comments on President Trump

Takaichi stated in her remark by praising President Trump in the following manner: "Security conditions around the world are becoming increasingly severe, and the global economy is also being significantly affected. However, I believe that Donald is the only one who can contribute to global peace and prosperity—indeed, the only one who can bring peace and prosperity to the world." Takaichi also stated as follows: "I also brought forward proposals aimed at stabilizing global energy markets. Regarding Iran, the development of nuclear weapons is absolutely unacceptable, and Japan has consistently made this position clear. In addition, concerning attacks on neighboring countries and the effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz, Japan—through Foreign Minister Motegi—has urged Iran's foreign minister to refrain from such actions." President Trump said, "I expect Japan to fulfill its responsibilities. Therefore, Japan has strong reasons to meet those expectations." Takaichi also stated the following comment: "I clearly conveyed Japan's position, including the need for an early de-escalation of the situation. We

also confirmed that Japan and the United States will continue close communication toward ensuring the safety of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz and achieving peace and stability in the Middle East, including stable energy supplies.” Takaichi further stated. “Well, although it was a rather brisk exchange, we agreed that ensuring the security of the Strait of Hormuz is extremely important. At the same time, under Japan’s legal framework, there are things we can do and things we cannot do, and I explained these points in detail.”

There are things that can be done and things that cannot be done—Trump must have asked what that means in military terms. However, this has not been publicly explained. It is not reflected in official briefings or videos, and what a further “step-up” would entail has not been disclosed.

This is not just about an 11-trillion-yen investment. It is not merely an economic issue. The claim that the outcome was “95 points” and therefore a success appears to come only from Japanese officials and newspapers, and does not necessarily reflect the broader reality. The reference to 45,000 U.S. troops stationed in Japan (in fact closer to 50,000) can be interpreted as a message: the United States has contributed significantly to Japan’s security and therefore expects Japan to do more.

However, we might be able to say that Sanae Takaichi is making a misjudgment. The crucial point is that the distinction between what can and cannot be done has not been clearly explained in actual reporting. According to Yukio Hasegawa, if U.S. forces were to engage in hostilities in the Strait of Hormuz and Japanese vessels were attacked, this could constitute a “survival-threatening situation” for Japan (e.g., Hasegawa 2026a). In that case, it might have been sufficient simply to state that Japan would closely monitor developments. By going further, it effectively disregards the peace and security legislation enacted under the Abe administration about 15 years ago, which addressed potential crises in the Strait of Hormuz. Despite Japan’s exceptionally high vulnerability—its dependence on the Strait of Hormuz is around 80%, compared to roughly 40% for China and a smaller percentage for the United States—Takaichi appears to dismiss this concern outright. Preemptive strikes are not explicitly addressed in Japan’s peace and security legislation. If the United States were to withdraw from the Strait of Hormuz, what would Japan do? Would Iran attack Japanese minesweepers? In reality, Japanese minesweepers could be highly vulnerable. Hasegawa is also closely watching this issue. The summit meeting is far from the end of the matter; rather, it marks the beginning of a critical phase. Japan’s defense posture is being put to the test. The Japanese media, however, seems complacent—simply celebrating that Japan is “far better than NATO” without deeper analysis. Shingo Yamagami, who previously served as ambassador to Australia, appears to share a similar perspective with Hasegawa (Hasegawa 2026c).

## 6. Takaichi’s economic support for the United States

At the White House dinner, Takaichi also stated, “To realize a strong Japan and a strong America, we are the ultimate **buddies**,” giving the impression of a personal camaraderie with the U.S. president. She particularly emphasized Japan’s plans to provide economic support to the United States. Note that she used the rather frank English word, “buddies.”

The main focus of the media coverage with respect to the support was on the concrete achievements accumulated during the summit. These included:

- A pledge of approximately ¥17 trillion in Japanese investment to the United States,
- The consolidation of three documents on cooperation in critical minerals,
- The announcement of the second round of strategic investment initiatives, including small modular reactors (SMRs),
- Confirmation of security cooperation, including joint development and production of missiles, and
- Securing “full support” for the abduction issue.

Regarding the Strait of Hormuz issue, it was positively assessed that military deployment was avoided, with detailed explanations provided about what could and could not be done within the scope of Japanese law.

Once the heat surrounding the phrase “ultimate buddies” cools down, what Japan will gain—whether the tangible benefits of the alliance or a massive military and economic bill—remains uncertain. The answer depends on how the Takaichi administration institutionalizes this “tightrope act” going forward.

## 7. The significance of Takaichi’s intense embrace

Finally, as this paper draws to a close, I would like to present a single photograph that captures Sanae Takaichi’s strong personal attachment to Donald Trump—an attachment expressed through an emotional and affective act that



transcends the boundaries of formal public conduct.

(From a Kyodo News, 2026, article)

The most striking moment of the meeting between Sanae Takaichi and Donald Trump was undoubtedly the photograph capturing their first encounter at the entrance of the White House. In that scene, Trump is seen spreading his arms wide in a welcoming gesture. In response, Takaichi goes far beyond a formal diplomatic greeting or handshake—surprisingly, she steps forward and throws herself into his chest, embracing him firmly with both arms. Although this was an official diplomatic occasion, such a display can be considered highly unusual. In particular, Takaichi’s emotionally charged and heartfelt embrace left many observers not just surprised, but genuinely astonished. It strongly suggests that her feelings toward Trump were exceptionally intense and deeply personal. This photograph is highly evocative of Takaichi’s deeply personal—yet remarkably strong and passionate—expression of “feeling,” one that arguably goes far beyond the bounds of a conventional diplomatic relationship with Donald Trump. For example, one possible option would be to deploy Japan Self-Defense Forces vessels to the Strait of Hormuz. Even if there may be differences in their political positions or ideas, could this not be seen as evidence of a close and intimate personal rapport between

the two that transcends such differences?

Speaking of Takaichi, she is often seen in Japan as a leading conservative politician—formal, dignified, strong, and even somewhat elevated in style. However, somewhat surprisingly, she can also be described as a politician who possesses a deeply human, passionate, and emotional side. After all, even in one of the most formal and prestigious settings imaginable—the White House, the residence of the U.S. president—she openly displayed her emotions, embracing the president without hesitation and even addressing Donald Trump by his first name, “Donald,” in a friendly and familiar manner (e.g., President Online, 2026). An article in President Online described Takaichi as follows:

Although opinions were divided over her decision to hug the president at their first meeting, The New York Times characterized the encounter with the headline, “Using charm and restraint, Japan’s prime minister largely avoided Trump’s anger,” and portrayed her first visit to the White House as one she navigated “largely unscathed” (The New York Times, 2026). Put differently, for Prime Minister Takaichi, openly hugging President Trump face-to-face was part of her rapport-building style and can be seen as demonstrating her distinctive combination of charm and restraint. In other words, since Japanese law does not permit the Self-Defense Forces to dispatch vessels to the Strait of Hormuz—meaning Japan must impose certain restraints on itself—this gesture of a hug can be interpreted as the best alternative action to achieve her objectives. In this sense, the hug simultaneously expressed both charm and restraint in a succinct and tangible manner. Ultimately, it can be argued that this seemingly simple act served to convey Japan’s own sense of presence in the international arena—a uniquely Japanese expression demonstrating that Japan maintains a degree of independence and asserts itself on the global stage.

## 8. Future Outlook: Will China Launch a Military Invasion of Taiwan, and What Are the Implications of the Summit Meeting?

When we consider a wide range of available information, it appears highly unlikely that such an invasion will occur in 2027. For example, according to annual reports issued by U.S. intelligence agencies (e.g., Office of the director of national intelligence community, 2026), China faces serious internal challenges, including economic instability, limitations in military capability, and declining support for the Communist Party. Given these factors, it is reasonable to conclude that an invasion this year or even next year (2027) is unlikely. Furthermore, there is also the issue of Taiwan’s strategic importance, particularly in the semiconductor industry. Taiwan is home to one of the world’s leading semiconductor companies, TSMC (Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company). TSMC is the world’s largest semiconductor foundry, manufacturing chips for many major companies such as Apple and NVIDIA. If a Taiwan-based company of this scale were to fall into crisis, it could also pose significant risks to mainland China itself. Taking all these factors into consideration, it can be said that the likelihood of China launching a military invasion of Taiwan is low, at least until 2027.

Here, let us take a brief look at the reports compiled and published annually by U.S. intelligence agencies. 2026 Annual Threat Assessment Report of the U.S. Intelligence Community is an official, coordinated evaluation by the U.S. Intelligence Community of global threats to U.S. national security. The main theme is the suggestion

that China may not use any military force to occupy Taiwan in 2027, even though China might use some nonmilitary ideas/plans (or peaceful unification with Taiwan) to occupy Taiwan. In particular, Taiwan's semiconductor industry is extremely significant, and for this reason, China cannot easily take control of Taiwan. Furthermore, corruption is pervasive within China, casting doubt on the strength of its domestic governance and institutional capacity. Under these circumstances, it would be difficult for China to undertake a military invasion of Taiwan. Furthermore, the level of loyalty to the Chinese Communist Party within China appears to be very low, and a range of internal challenges has undermined the state's capacity to conduct large-scale domestic operations. In Venezuela-related operations, Chinese-made missile systems reportedly failed to perform effectively, and a shortage of skilled technical personnel was evident. This points to ongoing limitations in China's military capabilities. Moreover, as suggested by developments in conflicts involving Iran, if the Strait of Hormuz were to come under U.S. control, it would significantly disrupt China's access to vital oil supplies. Some analysts view this as a potentially major strategic shock for China.

Hasegawa (2026d), a prominent Japanese journalist, argues that the discovery and securing of any enriched uranium that Iran may be concealing is, of course, of the utmost importance. However, beyond that, there are also possible unintended byproducts of an attack on Iran that merit consideration. One such possibility is that, if the United States were to move toward securing the Strait of Hormuz, this could, over time and largely out of sight, amount to the beginning of a de facto, invisible confrontation between the United States and China. This is because any closure of the Strait of Hormuz would severely restrict the flow of oil not only to Japan but also to China. While such a blockade would unquestionably deal a serious blow to Japan, it would likewise constitute a significant shock to China, given its dependence on energy imports transiting through this vital maritime passage.

Up to this point, we have examined the Takaichi–Trump summit, and overall, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. The summit can be said to have been, on the surface, a success.
2. However, it also presented Japan with certain challenges.
3. These challenges relate to Japan's response to a so-called "survival-threatening situation." Not only Takaichi, but also the Japanese public and media, should recognize the need to reaffirm Japan's "presence" on the international stage and cultivate awareness of potential new crises.
4. Looking ahead, Japan must consider how to navigate future international developments, particularly with regard to China and other global actors.

In other words, while the summit can be regarded as a superficial success, it also provided an important opportunity for both the Japanese government and the public to reaffirm their sense of national presence. It would be insufficient to simply celebrate the apparent success of the summit; rather, it is necessary to establish and strengthen Japan's own awareness of international crises and to prepare an appropriate response. Thus, the summit was successful on the surface, but it also clearly revealed challenges that must be addressed.

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