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US-JAPAN RELATIONS

A NEW PRIME MINISTER AND A GROWING ALLIANCE AGENDA

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2021 demonstrated the [difficult politics](#) that have attended the COVID-19 pandemic. In the United States, the Congressional certification of the presidential election became the focus of violent protest and an attempted insurrection to stop the transfer of power from Donald Trump to Joseph Biden. In Japan, while less volatile, the post-Abe era revealed the fragile balance of power within the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) that threatened to unseat unpopular prime ministers. The year began with Prime Minister Suga Yoshihide but ended with Prime Minister Kishida Fumio as Suga's public approval ratings [plummeted](#) in response to the government's pandemic management and the troublesome Tokyo Olympics. Japan's two elections, one for the [leadership of the LDP](#) and the other for the [Lower House](#), revealed just how sticky conservative politics are today. Undoubtedly, the election within the party drew the most interest as four new candidates emerged to claim the mantle of leadership of Japan's largest political party.

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Kishida emerged victorious after a second round of voting, which privileged those in the Diet over the rank and file of the party, with a [far more assertive stance](#) on Japan's strategic outlook. He then led his party to victory in the general election, overcoming an opposition coalition that continued to struggle to put forward a cohesive identity or policy agenda.

Diplomatically, Washington and Tokyo continued to focus on their Indo-Pacific cooperation.

The two militaries have continued consultations on how to cope with China's growing presence in and around Japan's southwestern islands. A new prime minister offered opportunity to further define the scope of US-Japan cooperation, and a new Biden-Kishida agenda is in the works. COVID-19 again intervened to prevent in-person meetings, but a virtual US-Japan 2+2 meeting allowed for continued alliance problem-solving.

Japan's Elections

Political change rarely seems surprising in Japan, but in the wake of the Summer Olympics, with a vaccination rollout underway, Prime Minister Suga thought he was well-prepared for his party's leadership election. He was mistaken. After difficult conversations with former Prime Minister Abe Shinzo and Deputy Prime Minister Aso Taro, Suga [announced](#) that he would not run after all. The two largest factions within the party had withdrawn their support for the embattled prime minister.

Thus began a fascinating race for LDP president scheduled for Sept. 29. Former Foreign Minister Kishida had thrown his name in even before Suga withdrew, signaling his intent to side with younger LDP members in the call for greater transparency and accountability in the party's leadership. Three others would join the race: popular vaccination czar Kono Taro; an ambitious advocate on the right, Takaichi Sanae; and, eventually, veteran Noda Seiko, who had served in both the Cabinet and LDP leadership positions. For the first time in its history, the LDP leadership race featured two men and two women.

The real tension within the LDP was generational. Younger Diet members had become increasingly uncomfortable with the closed nature of party decision-making, and the public's growing antipathy toward the money

scandals of some Diet members. By-elections leading up to the LDP leadership race suggested that even stalwart supporters were increasingly fed up with accusations of corruption. Younger Diet members were also much more interested in having policy lead in the selection of the party leader. A [series of public debates](#) highlighted the candidates' policy positions on Japan's economic, social, and defense challenges.

Surprisingly, Japan's defenses [drew considerable attention](#) in this party race. Kishida came out early in his bid for a more strategic approach to China and supported strengthening Japan's ability to deter aggression through the introduction of the capability to attack enemy bases if needed. Takaichi drew considerable support in her forthright advocacy of significantly upping Japan's defense spending to a level commensurate with US NATO allies and saying yes to the deployment of US intermediate-range missiles on Japanese territory. Kono and Noda were less willing to take a clear stand on military issues. Instead, they both highlighted changing social relationships within Japan, arguing that it was time that women should be able to retain their surname after marriage and for a more inclusive approach to LGBTQ rights.

No clear winner emerged in the first round of voting, which included rank-and-file party members as well as Diet legislators. In the second round, which [privileged](#) Nagatacho politicians, Takaichi aligned with Kishida to propel him to victory. In return, after Kishida drew 257 of the 427 votes within the party, he asked her to lead the party's powerful Policy Research Council. Takaichi thus became responsible for drafting the LDP's campaign platform, which incorporated the goal of [doubling Japan's defense budget](#) to 2% of GDP, a level closer to that of NATO countries. Few expect Japan to realize that goal, but it is notable that security issues now occupy a far more conspicuous role in LDP policy advocacy.

Little more than a week after Kishida became prime minister on Oct. 4, he [dissolved](#) the Lower House on Oct. 14 for an election on Oct. 31. Kishida needed to call an election at the latest by Nov. 28, given that the Lower House was nearing the end of its four-year term, but decided it was best not to wait. After a short campaign, just 55.9% of Japan's eligible voters participated in the election, which marked a slight increase from the last two elections in 2017 (53.7%) and 2014

(52.7%) but still represented the [third-lowest turnout rate in the postwar era](#).



Figure 1 Prime Minister Kishida Fumio in the Lower House of the Diet following his election on Oct. 4, 2021. Photo: Kimimasa Mayama/Shutterstock

Going into the election, Kishida [set a low bar for victory](#), saying he would be content if his LDP and its coalition partner, Komeito, could together hold onto a simple majority, meaning 233 of the Lower House's 465 seats. Many in the LDP similarly [expressed concern](#) about the party's electoral fortunes throughout the fall. Media companies and political pundits [predicted](#) that the LDP would lose at least 30 seats and perhaps more than 50.

Instead, the LDP [defied expectations](#) by capturing 261 seats, a decline of just 15 from its pre-election total of 276 seats. The LDP not only secured a simple majority on its own but also hit the magic number (261 seats) required to achieve what is known as a "[stable majority](#)," wherein the LDP can assign the chairs of all parliamentary committees. Together with the Komeito's 32 seats, the LDP-led ruling coalition now controls 293 seats, which is short of a two-thirds supermajority (310 seats) but still provides the Kishida Cabinet with a comfortable buffer above the stable majority threshold to [facilitate the passing of its agenda](#).

The LDP's unexpected success [exposed the continued weakness](#) of Japan's opposition parties. While the conservative, Osaka-based Ishin no Kai [performed well](#), nearly quadrupling its total from 11 to 41 seats, the liberal, multiparty coalition led by the Constitutional Democratic Party (CDP) did not, with the CDP decreasing its seat share from 110 to 96 seats. The worse-than-expected results for the CDP included the surprising constituency defeat of Ozawa Ichiro, one of Japan's most influential politicians and a

former president of the now-defunct DPJ, who lost his district seat for the first time in over 50 years, although he still secured a seat via the proportional representation (PR) component of Japan's hybrid electoral system. During the campaign, LDP leaders [harshly criticized](#) the CDP for coordinating with the Japan Communist Party (JCP) and even went so far as to frame the election as a choice for voters between democracy and communism. For instance, Kono Taro, director of the LDP's Public Affairs Department and runner-up in September's LDP leadership race, said, "The Communist Party's strategy is to get one foot in the door ... Then they wrench it open and take over the house." In response to the CDP's shocking electoral losses, both the party's leader, Edano Yukio, and its secretary-general, Fukuyama Tetsuro, [resigned](#).

This is not to say that the LDP did not suffer setbacks of its own in the election. Like Ozawa's shocking loss, the LDP also witnessed its share of stunning defeats of veteran lawmakers, often by much younger challengers. Perhaps the most notable of these instances came when the CDP's Hideshi Futori (44) defeated the LDP's Akira Amari (72), who became the first sitting LDP secretary-general to lose a district contest, though Amari too, like Ozawa, was rescued by the PR tier. Still, the result came as a surprise and led to Amari [resigning](#) his party post to be replaced by Foreign Minister Motegi.

In the end, the election marked a victory for the LDP, Komeito, and Prime Minister Kishida. Kishida's position within the LDP should now be [more secure](#) than it was [before the election](#), which in turn means that he should have a better chance at implementing key parts of his policy agenda such as lessening economic inequality and bolstering Japan's defenses. At the same time, Kishida will have to be [wary](#) about tackling policy issues that may be divisive within the LDP as he prepares to lead the party into next summer's Upper House election.

The Beginnings of a Kishida-Biden Agenda?

Japan's elections did not slow US-Japan strategic cooperation, however. Suga traveled to Washington, DC to attend the first in-person Quad summit on Sept. 24 as the LDP leadership race heated up. Economic security was the highlight for Quad cooperation, and the summit produced a [larger agenda](#) than the first virtual meeting. The resulting [joint statement](#) from the four leaders pledged cooperation on a wide range

of issues from the COVID-19 pandemic to climate change and critical and emerging technologies.

There was little indication that the US-Japan agenda in the Quad would suffer from Japan's leadership transition. As the LDP's new leader, and Japan's next prime minister, Kishida made it clear that he wanted Japan to contribute substantially to the coalition's effort to enhance economic security. A new position in the Cabinet was created for [economic security](#), and Kobayashi Takayuki was selected to lead the effort. At 46 years old, Kobayashi was the second youngest member of the Kishida Cabinet and [brought considerable expertise](#) to the job having worked on economic security policies as a former parliamentary vice minister of defense, in the LDP's Policy Research Council, and as a bureaucrat at the Ministry of Finance. Once the Lower House election was over, Kishida moved to initiate Cabinet discussions on an economic security agenda and announced the [creation of a task force](#) to draft legislation in time for the spring Diet session. On the task force were most of the major Cabinet ministers, and Kishida stipulated that a new law would focus on establishing secure supply chains and identifying critical technologies in need of protection.



Figure 2 Prime Minister Kishida Fumio greets US President Joe Biden during their first in-person meeting on the sidelines of the COP26 climate conference. Photo: Cabinet Public Affairs Office / Kyodo

Similarly, Kishida, like his predecessor Suga, signaled his support for cooperation with the Biden administration on climate change. On Aug. 31, Climate Envoy John Kerry [met](#) Suga in Tokyo as the first stop of his Asia tour. In a joint statement, the two governments said they would elevate the climate crisis to be a “[pillar of the Japan-US bilateral partnership](#)” and would cooperate on doing all they could to meet the international goal of limiting temperature

increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius. In November, the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow, Scotland, provided an opportunity for Kishida's first overseas trip as prime minister and his first face-to-face meeting with Biden. The two leaders only had time for a [brief conversation](#) on the sidelines of the conference but agreed to continue US-Japan cooperation on climate, security, and other regional issues, and to find time for a longer meeting soon.

At the COP26 summit, Biden [announced](#) that the US would start providing \$3 billion per year by 2024 to help developing countries combat climate change, while Kishida [pledged](#) an additional \$10 billion over five years to help Asia in working toward zero carbon emissions. Kishida's move followed Suga's promise at the G7 Summit in June to [commit](#) \$60 billion in climate finance from 2021 to 2025 and was aimed at helping developed countries [close in on their goal](#) of mobilizing \$100 billion per year. While Kerry [welcomed](#) the new commitment by Kishida, there are still some disagreements between the allies concerning climate strategies, such as Japan's [reluctance](#) thus far to aggressively phase out coal power.

The Kishida and Biden foreign policy teams even ended up in alignment on the more delicate question of how Japan would approach the Beijing Olympics. On Dec. 6, the Biden administration [announced a diplomatic boycott](#) of the 2022 Winter Olympics, a move that China's Foreign Ministry quickly [condemned](#) as violating the spirit of the games and one that would require China to respond with “resolute countermeasures.” Foreign Minister Hayashi Yoshimasa, in an early phone call with China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi, indicated his concern about human rights abuses in Xinjiang and the situation in Hong Kong. While the [readout](#) in *Xinhua* did not reflect these comments, the Japanese press [did](#). There had been some grumbling within LDP circles about Kishida's choice of Hayashi, grumbling that came from the [assertion](#) that Hayashi was too pro-China. One Upper House member even made a media event out of [visiting](#) the new foreign minister in his office to argue for a boycott of the Beijing Olympics. In the end, however, the decision was the prime minister's to make. While not claiming that Japan was joining the diplomatic boycott, Kishida [decided](#) to send a small delegation headed by Hashimoto Seiko, an Upper House lawmaker and president of the organizing

committee for the Tokyo Olympics, to the games to represent Japan, demonstrating Japanese affinity with the US and other democracies regarding concerns over China's human rights behavior.

The issue of trade, however, continues to challenge the US and Japan. In November, Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo and US Trade Representative Katherine Tai traveled to Tokyo for the launch of two new economic initiatives alongside Foreign Minister Hayashi and METI Minister Hagiuda Koichi. On Nov. 15, Raimondo announced the creation of the Japan-US Commercial and Industrial Partnership. This agreement is intended to “[strengthen the competitiveness, resiliency, and security](#)” of the two countries through cooperation on supply chains, export controls, and addressing unfair trade practices. Two days later, on Nov. 17, Tai announced the launch of the Japan-US Partnership on Trade. Meetings under this partnership are set to begin in early 2022 and will reportedly concentrate on “[third country concerns](#)” as well as labor issues, the environment, and a new digital ecosystem for trade.

Also in November, the US and Japan [reopened talks](#) on finding a resolution to US Section 232 national security tariffs on steel and aluminum imports from Japan. These tariffs were [imposed by President Trump](#) back in 2018. The restart of these discussions followed an announcement from the US and EU in October that the two parties had [ended their own Section 232 tariff war](#), with the US agreeing to allow the duty-free import of “limited volumes” of EU steel and aluminum before reverting to the previous tariffs. On Dec. 10, the US Commerce Department and Office of the US Trade Representative [pitched a similar offer](#) to Japan, but media reports suggest that the Japanese government is [holding out for a better deal](#).

Notably absent from US-Japan economic discussions in the fall was any mention of progress on trade agreements concerning the two allies, whether bilateral or multilateral. Trade officials in Japan have [long expressed hope](#) that the US will someday rejoin the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), but Commerce Secretary Raimondo again [ruled this out](#) in mid-November during her Asia tour and visit to Japan. Instead, she said the Biden administration remains focused on creating a

[new economic framework](#) for the Indo-Pacific in 2022, an initiative that President Biden [announced](#) in October at the virtual East Asian Summit.

Pressure on the US to “[step up its game](#)” on economic engagement in Asia has increased in recent months. The 15-nation Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) free-trade agreement—which includes Japan, South Korea, China, Australia, New Zealand, and ASEAN states, but not the US—[entered into force](#) on Jan. 1 for most member countries. Five nations—the United Kingdom, China, Taiwan, South Korea, and Ecuador—have also officially [started the process](#) of joining the CPTPP. Acceding to the CPTPP is [no easy task](#), given that prospective members must meet rigorous criteria for membership and receive the approval of all 11 partner nations. Nevertheless, China's official request on Sept. 16 [attracted significant attention](#) on both sides of the Pacific, especially after Taiwan [followed suit](#) with its own membership application just a few days later.

A key topic for trade in 2022 will be how CPTPP countries weigh the risks and benefits to accepting China and/or Taiwan into the pact. Japan is likely to continue playing a leadership role in these decisions, both because it has the largest economy among CPTPP members and because it has worked closely with the UK, the first applicant for CPTPP membership, as chair of the trade commission in 2021. While many observers are [skeptical](#) about whether China is [sincere](#) in its desire to join the CPTPP, or whether its actions are merely intended to [drive a wedge](#) between the US and its allies in Asia, China's formal application still [offers a potential opportunity](#) for Japan to use its clout within the CPTPP framework to negotiate with China on regional trade rules. In doing so, leaders in Tokyo will also clearly be on the lookout for more concrete news from Washington about Biden's trade agenda for the Asia-Pacific.

Tending the Alliance

Political change in Tokyo brought in a new foreign policy team while in Washington, DC political tensions on Capitol Hill stalled US ambassadorial picks. After months of delay, however, Rahm Emanuel was [confirmed](#) as Biden's ambassador to Japan on Dec. 18. Meanwhile, Japan's new Foreign Minister Hayashi had to [postpone](#) his first official trip to Washington, a place where he spent time

working on Capitol Hill and has deep personal networks, after the spread of the omicron variant caused the 2+2 meeting in early 2022 to be moved online.

Host-nation support negotiations resulted in a [\\$9.2 billion commitment](#) by Japan to support costs associated with US forces there. The talks reached an impasse during the Trump administration over different expectations of the scale of Japanese funding, but the Biden administration took a more balanced approach to considering the contributions Japan makes to US Forces Japan. In announcing the five-year agreement on Dec. 21, Defense Minister Kishi Nobuo told reporters that the deal demonstrated the two allies' "[resolution to stand up](#) to the challenge posed by the difficult security environment together."

US and Japanese forces continued to focus attention on how to cope with China's increasing presence in and around Japan's southwestern islands. The possibility of increasing tensions across the Taiwan Strait also motivated US-Japan military discussions on how to respond. On Nov. 11, US Indo-Pacific Commander John Aquilino traveled to Tokyo to meet with Defense Minister Kishi, Foreign Minister Hayashi, and Prime Minister Kishida, who said at the outset of their meeting that they would like the US and Japan to work together to realize "[a free and open Indo-Pacific](#)." The meetings in Tokyo came just a few days after Aquilino [visited](#) the Ground Self-Defense Force's Camp Amami in Kagoshima Prefecture, the Air Self-Defense Force's Naha Base, and the Ground Self-Defense-Force's Camp Yonaguni in Okinawa alongside Gen. Yamazaki Koji, chief of Staff of the Joint Staff.

US and Japanese militaries also [stepped up their exercises](#) in Asian waters and expanded them to include additional partners. In late November, a 10-day exercise showcased the range of actors willing to signal to Beijing the rising costs of its coercion against Taipei. Commanded by Vice Adm. Yuasa Hideki of Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Forces, the ANNUALEX, which took place in the Philippine Sea just south of Japan, featured over 35 ships and aircraft including those from allies such as Canada, Australia and, for the first time, Germany. Rear Adm. Karl Thomas, commander of the 7th Fleet, noted from his position aboard a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier that the exercise was designed to communicate the strong interest across the region in deterring aggression.



Figure 3 Admiral John Aquilino, Commander of the United States Indo-Pacific Command, meets with Japan's Prime Minister Kishida Fumio at Kishida's official residence in Tokyo, Japan on Nov. 11, 2021. Photo: Reuters / Issei Kato / Pool

The pandemic continued to shape Washington and Tokyo's ability to move the alliance agenda forward. In Japan, there was good news. The vaccination rate was approaching 80% by year's end, a [tremendously successful campaign](#) given that the rollout did not begin until the summer. The US, by comparison, [began vaccinations much earlier](#) but ended the year with just over 60% of its population vaccinated. Still, the pandemic's impact on Japanese politics was apparent during both the LDP leadership race as well as the general election. Moreover, the continued rise in cases of COVID-19 transmission in the US, largely fueled by the appearance of the new, highly transmissible omicron variant, prevented in-person leaders meeting and the early January 2022 US-Japan 2+2 meeting had to be moved online. Even the next Quad meeting, scheduled to be held in the spring in Tokyo, may be affected by the pandemic.

US and Japanese differences on pandemic management were a focus of alliance consultations. By November, the omicron variant began to make its way across the world, and Kishida [announced](#) on Nov. 29 that Japan would close its doors to all foreigners entering the country for 30 days starting the next day. On Dec. 18, Kishida [extended](#) this ban until at least early 2022. Those who were allowed to enter Japan went through a far more rigorous testing and quarantine regime. Japan's harsh border shutdown drew significant rebuke by non-Japanese who were separated from families as well as students and others who had planned on traveling to Japan for study and research. Nonetheless, media polling revealed that

Kishida's approach was [widely supported](#) by the Japanese public.

COVID cases remain significantly lower in Japan than in the US. As of Jan. 1, the daily average number of cases was just 344 in [Japan](#) compared to 386,923 in the [US](#). However, despite Japan's border closures, omicron has found a way into the country and case numbers are beginning to climb. On Dec. 22, several cases were [discovered](#) in Osaka. The US and Japanese governments have also clashed over the growing number of COVID cases among US military personnel in Okinawa. The [lack of US military testing](#) prior to deployment in Okinawa was conspicuously at odds with Japan's stringent restrictions on entry. Gov. Denny Tamaki was [outraged](#) and called on the Japanese government to impose far more stringent oversight of pandemic management practices by US forces in his prefecture, which now has the [highest daily rate](#) of new cases in Japan. On Jan. 9, Kishida placed Okinawa, as well as parts of Yamaguchi and Hiroshima, under a [quasi-state of emergency](#) in response to the surge in cases. The same day, the US and Japan [issued a joint statement](#) saying that US Forces Japan personnel would restrict their movements outside base facilities to only essential activities for the next two weeks.

Conclusion

As 2021 drew to a close, the US and Japan confronted important alliance decisions. Referenced in the US-Japan 2+2 [joint statement](#) in early January, the two governments identified the introduction of new Japanese military capabilities as well as the refinement of an alliance response to a possible use of force against Taiwan as their primary focus for alliance upgrades in 2022. With a new Cabinet in place, the Japanese government is preparing to present legislation for an economic security initiative to the Diet. This will enable far greater coordination between the US and Japan, as well as within the Quad and with European partners. Later in the year, a new Japanese National Security Strategy is expected as is a revised 10-year defense plan along with its accompanying procurement commitments. The Kishida Cabinet will be expected to realize the party's aim to increase Japanese defense spending, and Prime Minister Kishida seems ready to commit to the acquisition of a capability that would allow Japan to strike enemy bases if needed to defend Japan.

Elections also loom in both the US and Japan. The Biden administration will face the midterm elections for Congress. With 26 Democrats already announcing that they will [retire their seats](#), there is a high probability that Democratic majority in the House will be challenged by the Republican Party. And yet, the Republican Party is suffering from internal fissures as those on the far right, enamored of conspiracy theories and prone to calls for yet more violence, make their voices heard. The Kishida Cabinet will need to consider its own Upper House election in the summer of 2022. Difficult defense decisions, for example, are not likely until that election is past, and of course, Japan's new prime minister will have to demonstrate his ability to protect the Japanese people from the newest wave of COVID-19. The agenda for cooperation in the US-Japan alliance is full and growing regardless of the domestic political calendar. Far more intense consultations between Tokyo and Washington will be required to implement policy goals set out in 2021.

CHRONOLOGY OF US-JAPAN RELATIONS

SEPTEMBER—DECEMBER 2021

Sept. 3, 2021: Prime Minister Suga [announces](#) he will not run in the upcoming LDP presidential race and will resign by September 30.

Sept. 14, 2021: US Special Representative for the DPRK Sung Kim, Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs Director General for Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau Funakoshi Takehiro and Republic of Korea Special Representative for Korean Peninsula Peace and Security Affairs Noh Kyu-duk [meet](#) in Tokyo.

Sept. 22, 2021: Secretary of State Blinken and Foreign Minister Motegi [meet](#) on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly meeting in New York.

Sept. 22, 2021: Foreign Minister Motegi, Secretary of State Blinken, and Korean Minister of Foreign Affairs Chung Eui-yong [hold](#) a trilateral foreign ministers' meeting on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly meeting.

Sept. 22, 2021: US Food and Drug Administration [announces](#) that it has lifted import restrictions on Japanese food products related to the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear accident.

Sept. 23-26, 2021: PM Suga [visits](#) the United States for the Quad summit meeting and the UN General Assembly meeting.

Sept. 24, 2021: President Biden, Prime Minister Suga, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison, and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi [meet](#) in Washington, DC for the second Quad summit meeting.

Sept. 24, 2021: President Biden and PM Suga [meet](#) in Washington, on the sidelines of the Quad summit meeting.

Sept. 27, 2021: Keichi Ichikawa, director-general of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' North American Affairs Bureau, visits Washington, to [meet](#) Daniel Kritenbrink, assistant secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs.

Sept. 29, 2021: Kishida Fumio is [elected](#) president of the Liberal Democratic Party.

Oct. 4, 2021: Kishida is [elected](#) prime minister of Japan by members of the House of Representatives.

Oct. 5, 2021: President Biden and Prime Minister Kishida Fumio [speak](#) by telephone.

Oct. 7, 2021: Foreign Minister Motegi and Secretary of State Blinken [speak](#) by telephone.

Oct. 14, 2021: Kishida [dissolves](#) the House of Representatives for a general election on Oct. 31.

Oct. 19, 2021: Special Representative for the DPRK Sung Kim, Director General for Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau Funakoshi, and Special Representative for Korean Peninsula Peace and Security Affairs Noh Kyu-duk [hold](#) a trilateral meeting in Washington, DC.

Oct. 21, 2021: US and Japan [launch](#) new cooperation with the government of Indonesia under the Japan-US Clean Energy Partnership to increase clean energy investment in the Indo-Pacific.

Oct. 31, 2021: General elections are [held](#) for Japan's House of Representatives.

Nov. 1, 2021: Amari Akira [announces](#) resignation from post of LDP secretary-general following his district loss in the election.

Nov. 2, 2021: Biden and Kishida [hold](#) informal talks on the sidelines of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP26) meeting in Glasgow.

Nov. 4, 2021: Foreign Minister Motegi is [appointed](#) to post of LDP secretary-general.

Nov. 8, 2021: North American Affairs Bureau Director-General Ichikawa [meets](#) Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian Affairs Kritenbrink.

Nov. 8-9, 2021: Commander of the US Indo-Pacific Command Adm, John Aquilino and Chief of Staff of the Joint Staff Gen. Koji Yamazaki [visit](#) Ground Self-Defense Force's Camp Amami in Kagoshima Prefecture and Air Self-Defense Force's Naha Base and Ground Self-Defense Force's Camp Yonaguni in Okinawa.

Nov. 9, 2021: JASDF and the US Air Force [hold](#) first-ever joint search and rescue exercises north of Ishigaki and Miyako Islands in Okinawa.

Nov. 10, 2021: Hayashi Yoshimasa is [appointed](#) Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Nov. 11, 2021: Commander of the US Indo-Pacific Command Adm. Aquilino [meets](#) Defense Minister Kishi Nobuo, Foreign Minister Hayashi, and Prime Minister Kishida in Tokyo.

Nov. 11-12, 2021: Japan [hosts](#) 12th US-Japan Policy Cooperation Dialogue on the Internet Economy.

Nov. 13, 2021: Secretary Blinken and FM Hayashi [speak](#) by telephone.

Nov. 14-15, 2021: Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo visits Japan and [meets](#) FM Hayashi and Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno.

Nov. 16-18, 2021: US Trade Representative Katherine Tai visits Japan and [meets](#) with FM Hayashi and Chief Cabinet Secretary Matsuno.

Nov. 17, 2021: Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, and Office of the US Trade Representative [launch](#) the Japan-US Partnership on Trade.

Nov. 18, 2021: Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs Mori [meets](#) Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman.

Nov. 26, 2021: Biden [announces](#) the US will ban travel for non-US citizens from South Africa, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Lesotho, Eswatini, Mozambique, and Malawi out of concern for the omicron variant of COVID-19.

Nov. 29, 2021: Kishida [announces](#) Japan will ban entry for all foreign visitors out of concern for the omicron variant of COVID-19.

Nov. 30, 2021: Navies from the US, Japan, Australia, Canada, and Germany [conclude](#) the nine-day ANNUALEX in the Philippine Sea.

Dec. 6, 2021: Biden administration [announces](#) US diplomatic boycott of the 2022 Winter Olympic Games in Beijing.

Dec. 7, 2021: Japan [hosts](#) the Nutrition for Growth summit.

Dec. 11, 2021: Secretary Blinken and FM Hayashi [meet](#) on sidelines of the G7 Foreign and Development Ministers Meeting in the United Kingdom.

Dec. 12-15, 2021: Under Secretary of State for Economic Growth, Energy, and the Environment Jose Fernandez travels to Japan and [meets](#) Senior Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Hiroshi Suzuki.

Dec. 15, 2021: Department of State and Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry [hold](#) the second Japan-US Clean Energy Partnership plenary meeting.

Dec. 18, 2021: Senate [confirms](#) Rahm Emanuel as next US ambassador to Japan.

Dec. 18, 2021: Kishida [announces](#) that he is extending the ban on foreign visitors to Japan until at least early 2022.

Dec. 20, 2021: G7 foreign ministers [release](#) a joint statement expressing concerns about Hong Kong's Legislative Council elections, which took place on Dec. 19.

Dec. 21, 2021: Representatives of US and Japanese governments [announce](#) consensus has been reached on a new Special Measures Agreement concerning Host Nation Support.

Dec. 22, 2021: USTR Tai and FM Hayashi [speak](#) by videoconference.

Jan. 6, 2022: US and Japan [hold](#) a virtual 2+2 meeting.

Jan. 9, 2022: Kishida places Okinawa and parts of Yamaguchi and Hiroshima under a [quasi-state of emergency](#) in response to the surging number of COVID-19 cases.

Jan. 9, 2022: US and Japan [release a joint statement](#) limiting the off-base movements of US Forces Japan personnel to essential activities only for two weeks.

