

# Escalating Tensions Between China and Japan

(Translated)

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Historically, the Japanese were influenced by Chinese culture, philosophy, and religion, and their relations were largely confined to China, due to its proximity and China's advanced status. However, witnessing China's defeat at the hands of the West and its fall in the Opium Wars waged by the British led them to turn westward.

Beginning in the mid-19th century, they established trade relations with the West, admiring its scientific and industrial progress and seeking to emulate it. They sent students to acquire the secrets of industry and science. They even joined the international community founded by European nations on Western Christian principles.

Japan developed a set of concepts about the universe, humanity, and life, leading to the Industrial Revolution and becoming a major power. It fought a war with China for influence over Korea between 1894 and 1895, which China lost, forcing it to pay war reparations to Japan. From 1931 onward, Japan began attacking and occupying Chinese territory. However, after the United States launched atomic bombings at the end of World War II, Japan surrendered, thus ending its occupation of China.

Japan became aligned with America, adopting a capitalist system and focusing on its economy to become a superpower.

Meanwhile, China, having established a communist state that propelled it forward, began to concentrate on building its military strength to protect itself and to promote its ideology regionally. It began to threaten countries in the region, particularly in the East China Sea, where Japan is located, and the South China Sea, where numerous other countries are situated. This led to its involvement in the Korean, Vietnam, Laotian, and Cambodian wars against America and the West.

However, when China abandoned communism in foreign policy and economics after Mao's death in 1978, it began to focus on the economy and entered into agreements with the United States, which granted it trade priority in an effort to encourage it to completely abandon communism, and in the hope that it would become a Western power like Japan. Consequently, its relations with Western countries and with Japan improved, and the volume of trade between them increased to hundreds of billions of dollars.

However, deep disagreements persist between them, particularly concerning Taiwan and the Senkaku Islands, which are controlled by Japan and fall under the jurisdiction of Okinawa Prefecture, where US forces are stationed. China claims the islands, calling them Diaoyu, while Taiwan also claims them, having historically been part of Taiwan. Japan has granted Taiwan fishing rights in its waters. Other points of contention include the issue of an apology for Japanese atrocities committed during their occupation of China, and the issue of US-Japanese security cooperation aimed at China.

A radical shift in Japanese policy occurred at the end of 2022 with the announcement of a constitutional amendment concerning defense policy. Japan adopted a new defense strategy focused on building a truly capable military equipped with advanced weaponry, not only for defense but also for offense. This change alarmed China, which perceived it as directed against it and encouraged by the United States.

It is noteworthy that Japan's policy towards China shifted with the election of Sanae Takaichi as Prime Minister on October 21, 2025. On November 7, 2025, she stated that "any Chinese attack on Taiwan would be viewed as a threat to Japan and could lead to a military

response from Tokyo.” It should be noted that Japan occupied Taiwan during the First Sino-Japanese War until the end of World War II, when it was ceded to China at the request of the United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union.

China's reactions came in two forms. On November 14, 2025, Defense Ministry spokesperson Jiang stated, “should the Japanese side fail to draw lessons from history and dare to take a risk, or even use force to interfere in the Taiwan question, it will only suffer a crushing defeat.” On November 17, 2025, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning announced that “a meeting with the Japanese leader is not on Premier Li Qiang’s agenda.” On November 20, 2025, China declared that “Prime Minister Takaichi’s openly erroneous remarks concerning Taiwan have fundamentally undermined the political foundation of China-Japan relations and severely damaged bilateral economic and trade exchanges... Should the Japanese side persist on its course of action and continue down the wrong path, China will resolutely take the measures required, and all consequences shall be borne by Japan.”

These measures may include halting exports of rare earth minerals to Japan, as happened when they were halted for seven weeks in 2010 when Japan detained a Chinese fisherman who collided with coast guard vessels near the Senkaku Islands. They may also reduce the number of Chinese tourists to Japan, as happened in 2012, when they began to urge Chinese people not to travel to Japan. They may also stop importing Japanese seafood, as happened in 2023 when Japan decided to release radioactive water from the Fukushima plant into the Pacific Ocean, and so on, which would cause Japan significant economic damage until it reverses its position.

It appears that Japan was encouraged by the United States to adopt this stance. On October 28, 2025, President Trump met with the Japanese Prime Minister, and in a joint statement, they affirmed that “The two leaders instructed relevant ministers and secretaries to take further steps for a NEW GOLDEN AGE of the ever-growing U.S.-Japan Alliance.” They also signed a framework agreement to secure supplies of rare earth elements (REEs), following China’s reduction of its exports of these elements to both countries. The agreement included provisions for Japan to purchase American liquefied natural gas. Both countries sought to pressure China and prevent it from taking any steps toward annexing Taiwan. The United States also aimed to utilize Japan in its campaign against China.

Therefore, relations between China and Japan are likely to become more strained, especially since the Japanese Prime Minister has so far refused to retract her statements regarding Japan’s readiness to intervene militarily to protect Taiwan, despite Chinese threats. Furthermore, the United States has declared its support for Japan and is working to arm Taiwan, as evidenced by its announcement on November 14, 2025, of a \$330 million sale of military equipment to Taiwan. China, through its Foreign Ministry, strongly opposed the deal, deeming it a “serious violation of the One China principle,” and asserting that “the Taiwan issue is at the core of China’s fundamental interests and constitutes an absolute red line in Sino-American relations.”

This appears to be a deliberate policy adopted by Japan against China, encouraged by the United States, which is working to encircle China with adversaries, among other actions. If this crisis is not resolved and the Japanese Prime Minister does not retract her threats against China, it will have serious repercussions for trade relations between the two countries and for the global economy as a whole, given that they are the second and third largest economies in the world. Furthermore, it will likely spur Japan’s military activity, as China will be perceived as a threatening enemy justifying increased military spending and modernization.

What concerns us here as Muslims is to understand the relations between countries and what some of them plot against each other, so that we can take the correct stance according to the rulings of Sharia and employ that for the benefit of Islam and the spread of its call through the Khilafah Rashidah (Rightly Guided Caliphate State) that will be established soon, inshaaAllah.