

Current Issue:  
Who is Fumio Kishida, Japan's  
new prime minister?

October 6, 2021



# Who is Fumio Kishida?

- **Fumio Kishida is the new prime minister of Japan** after **winning** a dramatic runoff in the **ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)** leadership vote today.
- He will be Japan's **third prime minister** in just **over a year**, replacing the **deeply unpopular Yoshihide Suga**, whose fortunes began to fall after he followed Shinzo Abe into the prime minister's office last September.
- In a surprise result, Kishida, a **former foreign minister**, **narrowly beat his main rival, Taro Kono**, the **popular vaccine minister**, **256–255** in the first round of voting by party members.

# Who is Fumio Kishida?

- The mild-mannered Kishida, 64, comes **from a family of parliamentarians** — both **his grandfather** and **father** were members in the Diet.
- As a child, Kishida **spent three years** in **New York** when his father was posted to the US as a senior trade ministry official, where he attended **public school** in **Queens**.
- After graduating from prestigious **Waseda University** in Tokyo, Kishida had a short stint in banking before becoming a **member** of the **House of Representatives** in 1993.

# Who is Fumio Kishida?

- As Japan's longest-serving, post-war **foreign minister** in Abe's government from **2012–17**, Kishida helped arrange US President Barack Obama's historic visit to Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park in 2016.
- Unlike Kono and his similarly abstinent predecessors Abe and Suga, **Kishida does enjoy a drink**, having once reportedly **challenged Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov** to a drinking contest of **vodka** and **sake**.
- Critics say Kishida is **too indecisive**, which could leave him open to **influence by the party's faction chiefs**, particularly those from **Abe's** more **hardline nationalist** group.

# How about foreign affairs?

- In foreign affairs, little is likely to change. Kishida will likely continue Japan's **promotion of the Quad** – the security grouping made up of **Japan, the US, Australia** and **India** — and may even adopt Kono's proposal to develop **nuclear-powered submarines**.
- Kishida will continue to boost Japan's **Self-Defence Forces** – including developing longer-range missiles – to **deter China's incursions** in the **East China Sea**.
- He also backs Taiwan's **application** to join the Comprehensive and **Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP)** — a major trade agreement **China** is also **seeking to join**.
- However, Kishida regards maintaining **stable relations** with **Beijing** as a priority, as China remains Japan's **largest trading partner**.

# Japan's ruling party appoints 'Mr status quo' Fumio Kishida as next leader

Former foreign minister will be appointed PM on Monday after winning LDP leadership race

