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## **Nuclear Disarmament and Japan**

### **— Disarmament Priorities in East Asia —**

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May 2009

1. Debates on nuclear disarmament and the abolition of nuclear weapons have been on the rise of late, as exemplified by the articles contributed to the *Wall Street Journal* by the “Four Wise Men” (Kissinger, Shultz, Perry, and Nunn) in January 2007 and 2008, the establishment of the International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament co-chaired by Japan and Australia, the start of the Global Zero campaign, and landmark speeches by Prime Minister Brown and President Obama. Nuclear disarmament efforts continue to gain momentum. Arguments for nuclear disarmament and the abolition of nuclear weapons have become more concrete in nature and grounded in strategic reasoning (it should be pointed out that the recently presented road maps for the debate on nuclear abolition share several points in common) and it is worthwhile noting above all that even nuclear weapons states have come to advocate reductions and eventual abolition of nuclear arsenals. Whether this momentum toward the abolition of nuclear weapons will produce tangible results or not, however, remains to be seen.
2. With Japan the only country to have ever been attacked with nuclear weapons, the Japanese public have an extremely strong anti-nuclear sentiment, and the Three Non-Nuclear Principles of not possessing nuclear weapons, not producing them and not permitting their entry into the country have been confirmed as national policy by successive cabinets and Diets. Although some in Japan view the third of these Three Non-Nuclear Principles as problematic and although Japan is not without its advocates of acquiring nuclear weapons (to be discussed later), public opinion is overwhelmingly opposed to nuclear weapons.
3. However, East Asia’s geopolitical environment presents challenges for Japan. China’s significant enhancement of its nuclear, missile and other military capabilities, the opaqueness of its military doctrine, North Korea’s weapons of mass destruction (nuclear, chemical and biological weapons), its efforts to upgrade its missile capabilities, and its unpredictable behavior are at the very least potential threats to Japan. Given the Three Non-Nuclear Principles, neutralizing these potential threats will for the time being require Japan to remain under the US

nuclear umbrella, namely extended nuclear deterrence via the Japan–US alliance.

4. Japan finds itself in a touchy dilemma, having on the one hand a populace yearning to see nuclear weapons reduced and eventually eliminated, the Three Non-Nuclear Principles as a national policy, and an Atomic Energy Basic Law oriented entirely toward the peaceful use of nuclear power, and on the other hand a need to remain under the US nuclear umbrella.

Confronting this dilemma and explaining it to other countries is an issue that Japan will inevitably face in pursuing further nuclear disarmament.

Bearing the above in mind, several points (in no particular order) can be made regarding the connection between the recent global advocacy of the abolition of nuclear weapons and Japan's geo-political position. While each of these issues could easily require a major paper of its own, here I will simply summarize their key elements.

- (1) Views on the US nuclear extended deterrence. Limiting the nuclear umbrella to use in countering only nuclear attacks has recently been suggested; what are your views on this point?
- (2) Even if we were to argue from the high road for the abolition of nuclear weapons, this aspiration will likely remain pie in the sky for East Asia unless and until the North Korean nuclear issue is resolved. In that sense, the denuclearization of North Korea is a test case.
- (3) How can China be incorporated into the nuclear disarmament process?
- (4) Is the acquisition of nuclear weapons by Japan a realistic option?
- (5) Japan's peaceful use of nuclear energy, especially the connection between the nuclear fuel cycle and nuclear disarmament

#### 5. Several important issues:

##### (1) The nuclear umbrella (nuclear extended deterrence)

- a. Although the case recently put forth for the abolition of nuclear weapons recognizes that nuclear weapons have a deterrent capability as long as nuclear weapons exist on our planet, their role is deemed to be that of dissuading other countries from using nuclear weapons; non-nuclear threats and attacks are to be countered with conventional military force. Given the US's overwhelming conventional military strength, this is entirely possible in practical terms. Accordingly, the argument goes, the nuclear umbrella serves a limited role and first-strike use of nuclear weapons is therefore unacceptable
- b. This perspective differs greatly from the vision of the US nuclear umbrella long held in Japan, and poses a security problem for Japan. In addition to the opacity and the

unpredictable behavior of North Korea, its suspected possession of biological and chemical weapons means that extended deterrence to nuclear weapons is at the very least premature in the short term.

Japan needs to consider the level, scope, etc., of the nuclear umbrella from a medium- to long-term perspective in which reductions in nuclear arsenals are being made worldwide and the levels of nuclear weapons diminished while confidence is fostered and North Korea denuclearized through CVID.

- c. The US nuclear umbrella involves, after all, the question of credibility regarding the US's commitment to the defense of Japan. To strengthen this commitment, frank discussions between Japan and the US that do not regard the nuclear umbrella as a taboo topic are needed, as is at the very least a mechanism for consultations.

## (2) Resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue

- a. Several concrete road maps for the abolition of nuclear weapons have been proposed recently. Japan earnestly wishes to see steady progress in reducing nuclear weapons along these lines and looks forward to the day that nuclear weapons are abolished. The US and Russia are essentially the main actors in nuclear disarmament; to use a baseball analogy, they are pitcher and catcher, with the other nuclear armed states filling out the rest of the lineup. Attention is focused on how these two countries think and act, while Japan and the other non-nuclear states sit by as spectators. Nevertheless, spectators also have an important role in encouraging players to perform and creating a positive atmosphere. For instance, they can promote roundabout approaches to nuclear disarmament such as the CTBT and the FMCT and contribute to the formulation of rules.
- b. While expecting nuclear disarmament to proceed smoothly according to the road map might be overly optimistic, Japan as a spectator should make as great an effort as possible to encourage progress.
- c. Arriving at final resolutions to the pressing and immediate issues of the nuclear programs of Iran and North Korea is a major precondition for progress in nuclear disarmament; failure to do so will gut any hopes of ultimately abolishing nuclear weapons. The advocates for nuclear abolition need to focus their attention on resolving both the Iranian and North Korean issues, as these will be test cases for nuclear disarmament and the abolition of nuclear weapons.

## (3) Incorporating China into the nuclear disarmament process

China's nuclear arsenal is clearly much smaller than those of the US and Russia, and China itself has declared that the US and Russia must take the initiative in nuclear disarmament. Because China's nuclear weapons take on particular significance in its relations with Japan and India, reductions (even if only symbolic at first) should be asked of China when the time comes for the US and Russia to shrink their nuclear

stockpiles. In any case, China should be brought into the nuclear weapons abolition process as early on as possible.

### **Estimated total nuclear-weapon stockpiles, 2008**

[Source: Program on science and global security Princeton University]

<b>Country</b>	<b>Nuclear Warheads</b>
United States	about 10,000 5000 deployed • 5000 awaiting dismantlement
Russia	about 10,000 Large uncertainty as to the number of warheads awaiting dismantlement
France	fewer than 300
United Kingdom	185
China	about 240
Israel	100-200
Pakistan	about 60
India	60-70
North Korea	fewer than 5

(4) Is nuclear weapons development a realistic option for Japan?

The answer is “no” (see AJISS-Commentary “How Realistic is a Nuclear-Armed Japan?” No. 8, 20 July 2007, for details). Technologically, both nuclear warheads and the means of delivery are within Japan’s reach. Even if public sentiment in Japan could be overcome, however, the diplomatic and economic costs of nuclear weapons development by Japan would be exceedingly high, putting such a policy well beyond a feasible consideration.

(5) Japan’s peaceful use of nuclear energy, especially the connection between the nuclear fuel cycle and nuclear disarmament

Uranium enrichment and spent fuel reprocessing have the double personality of a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, and the latter personality must be kept in check when pursuing nuclear disarmament. The same applies to the nuclear fuel cycle.