

Assessing Japan's Disarmament Diplomacy

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Overview

The trend of nuclear disarmament is now rising. The trend, initiated by an op-ed by four Cold War warriors now known as the 'four horsemen'-- Henry Kissinger, William Perry, George Schultz, and Sam Nunn -- in January 2007, was consolidated through the election campaign for the United States presidency in 2008. Following this, President Barack Obama made a speech in Prague on April 5, 2009, which had a significant impact in setting the tone for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. Now that a global trend for nuclear disarmament has been set by President Obama's speech and the United States and Russia pledged the START follow-on arms reduction treaty, many people now expect movement and action toward a world free of nuclear weapons to be accelerated.

2010 will be a crucial year for global nuclear disarmament. The NPT Review Conference will be held in May, and critical events such as a new U.S.-Russian nuclear reduction agreement, a new U.S. posture toward the entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), the commencement of negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT), and so on, will also take place.

In the upsurge of and at a critical juncture for nuclear disarmament, what role can Japan play? Echoing the "four horsemen's" initiatives and President Obama's speech, leaders of various countries also expressed their wishes for a zero nuclear weapons world, and set nuclear disarmament as a major foreign policy priority. Former Japanese Foreign Minister Hirofumi Nakasone is not an exception. Mr. Nakasone made a public speech on April 27, 2009, titled "Conditions toward Zero – 11 Benchmarks for Global Nuclear Disarmament." In his speech, Mr. Nakasone stated that he has been feeling "momentum building toward nuclear disarmament" recently, and hoped "to bring the 2010 NPT Review Conference to a successful conclusion by all means."

Japan, as the only country to have experienced the tragedy of nuclear devastation, is

expected to play a leading role in promoting nuclear disarmament. Japan is also assumed to have the moral high ground to do so. In Mr. Nakasone's speech, he emphasized Japan's special position on this issue.

At the same time, many argue that Japan faces a difficult challenge to reconcile its national quest for nuclear disarmament and reliance of its security on the extended deterrence provided by the United States through the bilateral alliance. Views in Japan are divided. Most of the public believes that total elimination of nuclear weapons is absolutely a good thing, and seen as a goal to be achieved in the long run. However, at the same time, some believe that the maintenance of the U.S. nuclear umbrella is necessary, at least for the time being, as long as threats surrounding Japan still exist.

Therefore, there is always a gap between the expectations of civil society and the world (in particular, non-aligned movement states) for Japan's leadership role in promoting nuclear disarmament and the strategic reality that Japan has chosen to rely on U.S. extended deterrence as a key element of its national security policy.

In the following paper, I try to assess Japan's policy toward nuclear disarmament in such an institutionalized restraint. Of course, it is an important mandate for Japan to overcome this gap and include reducing the role of nuclear weapons in its national security policy in order to promote nuclear disarmament. I will try to assess this point in creating a balance between security realities and disarmament ideals.

In regards to the '13 Steps' in the final document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference, which was adopted by consensus, these remain important as political commitments agreed upon among all state parties to the NPT. However, due to developments in the international security environment since 2000, some items are outdated. Also, among the '13 Steps,' measures that are intended to not be taken by non-nuclear weapons states are included. Therefore, I do not employ the '13 Steps' as the criteria for assessment, although this does not necessarily mean that the '13 Steps' do not have any significance. Instead, the assessment here will be made in areas such as "International Initiatives to Facilitate the Global Disarmament Trend," "Treaties and Measures to Consolidate Nuclear Disarmament," and "Reducing the Role of Nuclear Weapons in National Security Policy."

The grading of each item ranges from A to E. "A" means that Japan has made a significant contribution to furthering the item. "B" means that Japan has made efforts to improve the situation, but the outcome has not been visible. "C" means that Japan's effort is not effective/sufficient enough to affect global nuclear disarmament. "D" means that Japan's effort has no impact on global nuclear disarmament. "E" means that Japan's effort has reverse impact on global nuclear disarmament.

I. International Initiatives to Facilitate Global Disarmament Trend

International Commission for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament: < B >

Recently, the Japanese government has launched some important initiatives. In response to a call by the Australian government for partnership, the Japanese government has been co-sponsoring a high-level track II initiative for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament: the International Commission for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, co-chaired by former Japanese Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi and former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans. It issued its report on concrete steps toward achieving a nuclear free world on December 15, 2009. It proposes achievable nuclear disarmament goals and action-oriented proposals that would guide the international community towards the objective of a nuclear weapons-free world.

The process followed by this commission involves civil society and values input from non-governmental groups. Although some may feel it is not sufficient, the ICNNP has established a much closer relationship with Japanese civil society, especially in comparison to other international initiatives. This makes the disarmament process more accountable to citizens.

Since it is not yet clear if there would be any serious, effective proposals of disarmament measures and steps at this stage, this assessment is limited only to the fact that the Japanese government played a certain role in launching this initiative.

Foreign Minister's Speech on April 27, 2009: < B >

On April 27, Foreign Minister Yasufumi Nakasone made a speech on Japan's nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation policy. In the speech, Mr. Nakasone defined Japan's mission to convey to people around the world the facts of the calamity of the nuclear bombings that happened in August 1945 in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

In the speech, Mr. Nakasone identified 11 benchmarks in three areas.

1. Nuclear Disarmament by All States Holding Nuclear Weapons

- Leadership by and cooperation between the United States and Russia
 - Look to the United States and Russia to lead the world toward a new security order by concluding a successor treaty to START I, further reduction of nuclear warheads, build mutual confidence regarding missile defense and strengthen the framework for controlling nuclear weapons and materials.
- Nuclear disarmament by China and Other States Holding Nuclear Weapons

- Encourage China and other states holding nuclear weapons to join global nuclear disarmament and freeze the development of nuclear weapons and missiles and other delivery vehicles.
- Transparency over Nuclear Arsenals
 - Dispel mutual suspicions and build confidence through the enhancement of mutual transparency over military forces. In particular, urge all states holding nuclear weapons to disclose sufficient information on nuclear arsenals under a “culture of information disclosure.”
- Irreversible Nuclear Disarmament
 - Welcome measures taken by nuclear weapons states for ensuring irreversible disarmament and further urging them to take such measures.
- Study on Future Verification
 - Emphasize the importance of highly accurate verification for nuclear weapon dismantlement while protecting sensitive information, and expressing readiness to contribute to the UK-Norway-VERTIC initiative for technical research on verification.

2. Measures to Be Taken by the Entire International Community (Multilateral Measures)

- Ban on Nuclear Tests
 - Welcome the new US administration’s positive stance and expect that the US administration will ratify the CTBT by the next NPT Review Conference. Also, encourage other Annex II states such as China, India and Pakistan to ratify the treaty, drawing up “a program to promote the early entry-into-force of the CTBT,” which is to make demarches and provide technical training to experts of relevant countries. Moratorium also should be called.
- Ban on Production of Fissile Material for Nuclear Weapons Purposes
 - Urge the commencement of the negotiations and moratorium.
- Restrictions on Ballistic Missiles
 - Support the globalization of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, and the EU’s move to propose a treaty to ban short- and intermediate-range ground-to-ground missiles.

3. Measures to Support Countries Promoting Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy

- International Cooperation for Civil Nuclear Energy
 - Introduce the “3S (safety, security and safeguards)” approach for assisting countries in the new construction of nuclear power plants, and provide human

resource development and capacity building assistance. Plan, with cooperation with the IAEA, to host an international conference on nuclear security issues related to Asian countries.

- IAEA Safeguards
 - Support and work towards the universalization of the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements and the Model Additional Protocol by sharing knowledge and experiences through IAEA seminars and the Asian Senior-level Talks on Non-Proliferation (ASTOP).
- Prevention of Nuclear Terrorism
 - Welcome President Obama's proposal to create a new international effort to strengthen controls of nuclear material and host a 'Global Summit on Nuclear Security.'

Mr. Nakasone also proposed hosting a '2010 Nuclear Disarmament Conference' to accelerate the momentum of global nuclear disarmament in order to lead the 2010 NPT Review Conference towards a successful conclusion.

This comprehensive proposal itself has a certain value in encouraging the world to envision a concrete process towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons. First, the speech addressed what is to be done for nuclear disarmament by three different groups of states: the role of the nuclear weapons states, the role of the international community as a whole, and the role of countries that are trying to benefit from nuclear energy. By doing so, it tries to engage all related parties in nuclear disarmament and make them aware of responsibilities, hence making nuclear disarmament a truly global commitment.

Second, it identifies key items for nuclear disarmament and re-frames them to fit current disarmament realities, while not substituting or undermining the importance of the "13 Steps." For example, the Nakasone speech dropped some items in the 13 Steps, such as the completion of the Trilateral Initiative and the commitment to the ABM Treaty, both of which are no longer relevant. (Nevertheless, it should be noted that the Japanese government needs to address the question of how the Japanese missile defense system and possible cooperation of Japan in U.S. ballistic missile defense affects regional security and nuclear disarmament.)

Further, some items are "objectives" rather than "measures," and concrete steps and measures need to be addressed. Such "declaratory" postures must also be backed by concrete policy measures and possibly budget appropriations. We need to keep our eyes on the implementation phase of the speech. More importantly, the speech has not yet addressed what Japan can do to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in Japan's security policy, in contrast to

President Obama mentioning the reduction of the role of nuclear weapons in his speech on April 5. This point is further discussed below.

Submission of Nuclear Disarmament Resolutions at the U.N. First Committee and General Assembly: < B+ >

The Japanese government has submitted a resolution on nuclear disarmament at the First Committee of the United Nations since 1994. Japanese resolutions have gained overwhelming majority support, although recently the United States, North Korea and India have regularly opposed Japanese resolutions.

Disarmament Education and Increasing Awareness on Nuclear Disarmament: < A- >

Japan has always taken a lead in promoting disarmament education. As the only country to have experienced nuclear devastation, Japan is destined to ensure that the tragedies of Hiroshima and Nagasaki should never be forgotten.

Japan participated in the Group of Governmental Experts on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Education, which was created following the 55th U.N. General Assembly resolution. The group was established in order to increase awareness on the issue among youth in order to break the stagnation on nuclear disarmament. Ambassador Yukiya Amano participated in four sessions of the group, and the group commissioned a report, which was submitted to the Secretary General of the U.N. in August 2002. Since then, this item is what the Japanese government puts most emphasis on among disarmament policy agendas. Japan has been submitting working papers on disarmament education, in cooperation with other states, to the NPT Review Conference and its preparatory committees.

Due to budget constraints, the idea of promoting disarmament education has not been fully realized. (Budget appropriation is a general problem of Japan's disarmament diplomacy.) Also, greater involvement of Japanese civil society actors is desirable, while Japanese A-bomb survivors (*hibakusha*) have been playing an indispensable role. Their dedication to the movement of disarmament education should be highly commended. The Japanese government organizes side-events on disarmament education in cooperation with the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies in Monterey, California, inviting A-bomb survivors and school teachers on occasions of the NPT Review Conference and its preparatory committees.

Since 1983, Japan has invited more than 650 diplomats in total from various countries to Tokyo, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, through the United Nations Program of Fellowship on Disarmament. Many diplomats involved in disarmament diplomacy have experienced this program and learned the importance of disarmament through their

experiences of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Although this program is not so visible to the Japanese and international audience, it has steadily increased the number of nuclear disarmament sympathizers in the diplomatic community.

Since 1989, the Japanese government has supported the convening of the U.N. Conference on Disarmament Issues, which is held in different cities under the auspices of the United Nations Regional Center for Peace and Disarmament in the Asia Pacific Region. The conferences are expected to increase awareness on nuclear disarmament at the regional level, and to provide venues for informal and frank discussions among experts.

II. Treaties and Measures to Consolidate Nuclear Disarmament

Early Entry into Force of the CTBT: < B+ >

Japan has identified early entry into force of the CTBT as one of the most important measures to promote nuclear disarmament and is one of its most enthusiastic advocates. Despite the significance of the US-Japan alliance, Japan did not compromise on this point when the former US administration insisted on no-entry-into-force of the CTBT. Even when it reached the point that the US government could not vote for general assembly resolutions on nuclear disarmament sponsored by Japan, the Japanese government maintained its strong support for the CTBT early entry into force. However, it is not clear if the government of Japan has made extra efforts to persuade the United States and other Annex II states such as China, India, and others to ratify the treaty.

Japan has been supporting the convening of various meetings, such as the foreign ministers' meetings of "friends of the CTBT" and conducting bilateral demarche to non-party states to CTBT. The Japanese government has also provided technical assistance to countries for ratification of the CTBT and establishing monitoring stations and networks.

Early commencement of FMCT negotiations: < B >

Japan has been supportive of an early start of negotiations for FMCT with verification. When the previous US administration rejected the idea of a verifiable FMCT, it brought about a serious confrontation between the United States and Non-Aligned Movement countries. In fact, it added another complication to politics over the commencement of negotiations for FMCT, which had, by that time, already stalled over linking the establishment of an ad hoc committee for PAROS with the negotiation mandate and other issues. In a sense, the stalemate of FMCT negotiations has become a symbol of the ineffectiveness of the Conference on Disarmament (CD).

Japan has worked to break this deadlock as a coordinating state at the Conference on

Disarmament in Geneva. Japan's position was 'start negotiation, talk on verification in negotiation.' Although Japan's efforts did not make a breakthrough, it was a constructive proposal to attempt to make progress in FMCT negotiations.

The recent session of CD has agreed on the commencement of negotiations on the FMCT in the program of work for the 2009 session, adopted on May 28, 2009. But we need to be carefully reminded that it is viable only for the 2009 session, and CD should continuously work to progress the negotiations after 2009.

Further Development of Verification Capabilities: < B+ >

Japan has been advocating the universalization of the Additional Protocol (AP) and making the AP the verification standard. Japan has contributed to the IAEA's fund and co-sponsored seminars with the IAEA to emphasize the importance of the IAEA and to encourage non-AP countries to ratify this protocol. Japan has also made ratification of the AP a condition for concluding bilateral nuclear cooperation agreements. Recently, Japan has made nuclear cooperation agreements with Vietnam and Kazakhstan upon their commitment to the AP.

For the verification of nuclear testing, under the five year plan, Japan has been completing its domestic monitoring systems and network. Japanese experts participate in working groups and practices for establishing an appropriate and effective on-site inspection system for the CTBT. Japan has also provided bilateral technical assistance.

A future task is how Japan, as a non-nuclear weapons state, can contribute to improving the confidence of nuclear disarmament through verification. The United Kingdom, Norway and VERTIC, a non-governmental body specializing in verification measures, are currently conducting research on ways for non-nuclear weapons states to play some role in the verification of nuclear disarmament without accessing sensitive information on nuclear weapons. The Japanese government expressed its interest in joining this effort in Mr. Nakasone's speech. Japan has promising technology in the area of safeguards, such as the Waste Crate Assay System (WCAS) and monitoring and analyzing radionuclide in the air at the Clean Laboratory for Environmental Analysis and Research (CLEAR).

Nuclear forensics is another area that Japan should be able to provide more cooperation in. Nuclear forensics is a method to identify the origin of nuclear and radioactive materials, making it possible to identify where nuclear and radioactive materials found in an unexpected location originated, thus preventing thefts or diversions. It aids in preventing the illicit transfer of nuclear materials to terrorists as well.

Exception of India following NSG's Guidelines: < C >

Japan did not make publicly clear its position until the last minute on the U.S.-India deal making India an exception to the Nuclear Suppliers Group's guideline for nuclear trade, although Japan's final decision to approve it was not surprising. Under the political circumstances in which no country opposed the decision, it was not realistic for Japan to solely oppose the decision. However, Japan could have done more to reinforce the importance of NPT norms. Japan could have made more diplomatic efforts to attach more stringent disarmament commitments to India as a condition for the deal. Now that the international community, including Japan, has accepted India as a full-fledged partner of the nuclear club, except for its non-membership of NPT, Japan and other countries should strengthen dialogue and cooperation with India in the areas of disarmament and non-proliferation efforts.

III. Reducing the Role of Nuclear Weapons in National Security Policy: No First Use, Nuclear Weapon Free Zone, and Negative Security Assurance: < B- >

This is a point of great controversy, because it raises the question of the relationship between nuclear disarmament and the importance of extended deterrence in Japan's security policy. Mr. Nakasone's speech was insufficient in this respect. In particular, it served as a contrast to President Obama's speech, which provided a direction for reducing the role of nuclear weapons.

Japanese NGOs are advocating declaratory and confidence-building measures such as a No First Use declaration by the United States in the context of the US-Japan alliance, a Nuclear Weapon Free Zone (NWFZ) in Northeast Asia, and a collective pledge by nuclear weapons states on negative security assurances.

The position of the Japanese government on these measures is a cautious one. In general, the Japanese government supports the idea of negative security assurances (NSA). Such support has been expressed in government statements at conferences of the NPT Review Process.

In contrast to such general support for NSA however, in the context of the US-Japan security alliance and the US commitment to defense of Japan, the Japanese government is in a position in which it is pressured to support US non-commitment to NFU. As a result, it is persuaded not to accept negative security assurance as a part of its own national security policy.

In East Asia, nuclear weapons remain a central piece for shaping security, especially given the strategic relationship among the countries concerned. North Korea has not given up its nuclear ambitions. China has been developing and modernizing its nuclear capability as well as conventional military capabilities.

For the Japanese government, it might be rather irresponsible to abandon the US extended deterrence/nuclear umbrella without alternative measures to guarantee the security of Japan, as long as the United States maintains ambiguity in cases for the use of nuclear weapons (not declaring No First Use), and as long as a clear prospect for China's reduction of its nuclear arsenal is not indicated. Japan needs to ensure that East Asia does not become a center for an arms race, but rather try to make the region a driver of global disarmament efforts.

The author views, to some extent, some rationality in the current Japanese government's position to maintain, for the time being, the role of nuclear weapons to deter any aggressive attacks against Japan. The author is also cautious in unconditionally adopting NFU or NWFZ as Japan's security policy, or a unilateral declaratory policy in the absence of confidence among state parties in Northeast Asia where four nuclear armed states, namely China, North Korea, the United States and Russia, are involved.

One of the major tasks after a US-Russian START follow-up disarmament agreement should be to get other nuclear weapons states involved in the global disarmament trend. In particular for Japan, how to get China involved in global nuclear disarmament efforts is the priority, both in terms of reducing nuclear threats as well as creating a breakthrough in global nuclear disarmament.

Among other nuclear weapons states, only China is steadily increasing its nuclear capabilities as well as conventional weapons capabilities. It would be a major challenge for the international community as well as the Chinese strategic community to reverse this trend.

While China has declared an NFU policy vis-à-vis any non nuclear weapons states in any condition and the exclusively defensive nature of its nuclear capability, China's claim on its nuclear posture is considered reliable due to the absence of confidence among countries concerned in the region and the lack of a reasonable interpretation as to why China is building up its nuclear capability. Under such circumstances, it would be too optimistic to assume that Japan's unilateral adoption of NFU would induce China's voluntary reduction of its nuclear arsenal.

However, a new trend is emerging. As clearly stated in President Obama's speech, the role of nuclear weapons in national security policy is destined to be reduced, and there may be a possibility that there could be a global commitment to restricting nuclear deterrents only against nuclear attacks by others, which is an NFU commitment. If that is the case, a nuclear weapon free zone in Northeast Asia may be one security measure to reduce the nuclear threat in the region. However, at this moment, there is no indication that the U.S. government would employ NFU as a measure to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in its national security policy.

Military capability buildups and the lack of transparency make the Japanese strategic community assume the worst case in regards to China's military capability. China's rapid rise and the prospect of a reversal in the strategic balance between Japan and China, both in air and sea power, makes it difficult for the Japanese strategic community to give up the role of nuclear weapons in deterring attacks. Clearly, a major point underlying the mutual distrust of China's declaration of NFU and NSA is the lack of common understanding on what 'deterrence' means to the Chinese, on the one hand, and to the Americans and Japanese, on the other.

Thus, relaxing the nuclear posture in the context of the U.S.-Japan alliance and transparency measures, and 'tangible' or physical commitment to the NSA by China, must be pursued in a mutually reinforcing manner so that such dialogue would induce further nuclear threat reductions in East Asia.

In general, no first use, negative security assurance, and the nuclear weapon free zone are measures to build confidence among nuclear and non-nuclear weapons states, thus reducing the role of nuclear weapons in security policy, which will eventually lead to nuclear disarmament. However, it is sensible for policy makers to consider the applicability of such measures in the specific security and strategic context in which their countries exist.

In this respect, Japanese policymakers' position on these measures is understandable. However, maintaining the status quo would not reduce nuclear danger in the region, and Japan will not be able to proactively contribute to nuclear disarmament. Japan should consider a strategy to engage China in global nuclear disarmament while reciprocally addressing China's security concerns at the same time. This would reduce 'net' nuclear and military threats in the region.

Conclusion

As the only country to experience the devastation caused by nuclear weapons, Japan is obliged to promote nuclear disarmament. The quest by the government as well as the people for nuclear disarmament is genuine. Some elements of Japan's disarmament diplomacy have been viewed as important proposals and measures towards the ultimate objective of nuclear disarmament, if not the total elimination of nuclear weapons. However, difficulties exist in the balance between strategic and security interests and the ideal of nuclear disarmament. In addition, Japan's status as a non-nuclear weapons state poses a limitation on Japan's influence.

Nevertheless, it is an opportune moment for the world to further accelerate the pace

of nuclear threat reduction and disarmament. As symbolized by President Obama's speech, the international community now must make a critical decision to go beyond the conventional wisdom in nuclear disarmament and nuclear strategy. Japan also needs a "new thinking" in its role and mission, as well as capabilities for nuclear disarmament, to pursue both the improvement of its security and the global objective of the abolition of nuclear weapons.